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STUDIES
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STUDIES

HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL

BY

PASQUALE VILLARI

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA"
"THE LIFE AND TIMES OF NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI,"
"THE FIRST TWO CENTURIES OF FLORENTINE
HISTORY," ETC.

TRANSLATED BY LINDA VILLARI

WITH SEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS IN PHOTOGRAVURE

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FOREWORD

THIS volume requires no regular preface, for it only contains seven essays selected from the great number I have written on various topics and at different times. But I have tried to choose subjects of general rather than of solely Italian interest, and venture to hope that even the papers on entirely Italian themes may awake some echo of England's steadfast sympathy with us during our prolonged struggle for freedom.

At the head of the list is the paper recounting the numerous theories and disputes on the question whether history is to be regarded as literature or science—a sorely vexed question that has been everywhere continually and hotly discussed.

Next in order of interest I should place the essays on De Sanctis and Morelli. The former, because Francesco De Sanctis was undoubtedly the most original critic that Italy has ever produced. But although he was appreciated at his true value by two such eminent foreign authorities as Schopenhauer and Gaspary, and although the latter did his utmost to make him known to the German public, so far his works have scarcely passed the boundaries of his native land.

In Domenico Morelli we have a man of rare genius and the creator of a new school of painting in Naples.

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But he, too, despite the enthusiastic praise of all Italian and foreign artists who have studied his works, is less widely famed than he deserves to be in other countries.

My reason for including a discourse on Savonarola —which, to some readers, may appear too well-worn a theme—was the fact of its having been delivered at a time when the old veneration for the martyred friar had been suddenly revived in Florence, and writers of various nations were again discussing the vicissitudes of his career, and trying to determine the precise nature of his beliefs.

While the public life of our greatest statesman, Count Camillo Cavour, has been the theme of many masterly works in England, Italy, and throughout Europe, even his own countrymen knew comparatively little of his early years before the publication of the splendidly edited collection of his "Letters," from which I have derived my sketch of "The Youth of Count Cavour," and of the influences that served to mould his character and equip him for the wonderful part he had to play.

Changes have taken place both in literature and science since some of these essays were written. Yet it seemed best to leave them in their original form, since any attempt to alter them would only have destroyed the characteristic note of the hour that gave them birth, without adequately bringing them into touch with the most recent points of view.

The reader will decide if they merited the honour of appearing in English dress.

PASQUALE VILLARI.

FLORENCE, 1907.

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Taken from a painting at the Louvre, comprising also the portraits of Giotto, Paolo Uccello, Antonio Manetti and Filippo Brunelleschi. This work was known to Vasari, who, in the edition of 1550 of his "Lives of the Painters," attributes it to Masaccio's brush (I. pp. 290, 291), but in the edition of 1568 assigns it to Paolo Uccello. In Vasari's time this panel-painting belonged to the descendants of Giuliano da San Gallo. Vasari himself had this portrait of Donatello engraved for his "Lives," and also introduced it in his Palazzo Vecchio frescoes. In fact, it is the earliest authentic portrait of Donatello known to exist, and the panel in the Louvre, although disfigured by numerous restorations, is generally accepted as the work of Paolo Uccello.

VIEW OF THE PIAZZA DELLA SIGNORIA, FLORENCE, SHOWING THE EXECUTION OF SAVONAROLA AND HIS DISCIPLES . . . . . *Facing p.* 285

There are several duplicates of this composition in Florence at the Museum of St. Mark's and in the Corsini gallery; others in the gallery at Perugia and in the possession of Dr. Am. Ricordi, of Milan. It has been recently reproduced by J. del Badia, in *La Nuova Sede dei Palazzi della Condotta e della Mercanzia*, at p. 21, from the frontispiece of a volume containing the documents of Savonarola's trial in the Royal Archives (State Papers). All these are duplicates of a lost original work, produced in memory of the Friar's martyrdom by some contemporary artist. It will be observed that Donatello's Judith is to be seen on the platform flanking the main entrance of the Signoria, whence it was removed in 1504 to make room for Michelangelo's David.

IS HISTORY A SCIENCE?

IS HISTORY A SCIENCE?

I

Of late years a question has sprung to life again that seemed to have been buried for ever in the pit of academic disputes. Once more there is a brisk war of words in books, pamphlets, and papers as to whether history be an art or a science, and so far the disputants have arrived at no agreement. Of course, the point at issue is not highly important in itself, and possibly it were better to jump to the conclusion that history is neither poetry nor philosophy, neither an art nor a science, but simply history. Nevertheless, the fact of the question having been revived and given birth to an almost new form of literature undoubtedly endues it with importance, if only as a sign of the times. Therefore it seems necessary to study some of the works which have been written on the question. Then we shall see what general results, and of what nature, it may be possible to derive from them.

It was about the middle of the last century, as all the world knows, that Mr. Buckle believed he had finally discovered the way to convert history into an exact science by basing it upon statistics, and produced his "History of Civilisation in England." This work not only received great praise, but also

roused general enthusiasm as the apparent revelation of a new philosophy of mankind and of the human mind. But Mr. Buckle died in 1862, and soon afterwards the general enthusiasm for him faded away; his discovery was judged to be little more than a dream of his heated imagination, and the subject was dropped.[1]

At a later date Professor Seeley re-opened the discussion, but in a far less pretentious manner. In his famous book, "The Expansion of England," he explicitly says that every historical work should give the solution of some political problem.[2] Also, in two addresses delivered by him at the Manchester Historical Institute, the professor declared that the scanty progress in England of historical research was caused by the prevalence there of literary rather than scientific methods. Thus history, he continued, is reduced to a narrative only fit to amuse the curiosity of children. The true historian is no teller of tales: he is a discoverer of the laws ruling that great social fact called the State. History is a vast Blue-book for the politician, and his course of action must be wholly guided by its rules. Therefore, as Taine justly said in the preface to his work, "Les Origines de la France Contemporaine," he had found it impossible to form any definite political opinion until he had thoroughly mastered the history of his own times. One often speaks of amusing history, of delightful history, without reflecting that this is only another name for untrue history. In reality, the scientific

[1] *Vide* a detailed account of Buckle and his work in my "Arte, Storia e Filosofia" (Florence: Sansoni, 1864).

[2] "The Expansion of England": London, 1883. A paper on this work is included in another volume of my essays: "Saggi Storici e Critici" (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1890).

method is the only true method, the literary method a false one. The former—unknown before the present day—seeks the *principles* of politics, the *laws* of events, and these can be learnt from history alone.

The latter, on the contrary, studies individuals, in order to ascertain if they acted well or ill, and gives us a non-political, unscientific history of individual characters, without taking into account the marvellous organism that joins men together in a social body, and therefore fails to notice the main problem with which politics and history have to deal. As a champion of the scientific method, I do not rob history of its *interest*, but enrich it instead with an interest of a nobler and truer sort.

Certainly, one might ask at this point: Then what will be the fate not only of the chronicles of ancient days, but also of the works of modern historians such as Thierry, Prescott, Macaulay, Colletta, and many others, in whose writings graphic and eloquent narrative is undeniably a predominant merit? Professor Seeley, however, says nothing about this. He winds up instead with a quotation from Thackeray's "Humorists of the Eighteenth Century," where the great novelist remarks that the knowledge of special events as afforded by history is always extremely uncertain. But by studying the works of imagination of this or that century one may gain from them a far more accurate knowledge of the modes of thought and feeling of that age. In fact, it was from the pages of the *Spectator* and Smollett's works that Thackeray derived his most vivid and speaking pictures of the men of that time—of their ideas, their feelings, their way of life. Yet Professor Seeley quotes this passage to exemplify the absurdities we may be led to commit by preferring to study

history on the literary method.[1] Other writers have expounded the same theory, but neither so confidently nor so crudely. But even Professor Freeman declared, in "The Methods of Historical Studies,"[2] "that history is but past politics, and politics are but present history." This is the identical theory that was first started in Germany by Dahlmann when he openly said that politics were the object of his literary labours. Likewise Lorenz, while commenting in his "Science of History" on certain defects in the writings of Dahlmann, who unduly neglected the life and movement of facts, and often treated men as pure abstractions, comes nevertheless to the same conclusion, namely, that modern history being a result of the scientific eighteenth-century spirit reduces all things to problems which have to be solved, and that the true field of historical research is the field of politics.[3]

This theory is vigorously combated by other writers, as, for instance, by Bruno Gebhardt, who, in his work on History and Art, maintains that[4]: "What constitutes art is the intimate union of idea and form, of the contained with the containing. Even history comprises two elements, has two constituent parts. One of these discovers facts while the other expounds them; the first factor preparing the material for the second, which is art.

[1] Professor Seeley's two addresses appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* for 1881 and 1882.

[2] *Vide* Freeman, in "The Methods of Historical Studies," p. 8 (London: Macmillan, 1886).

[3] *Vide* Lorenz, "Die Geschichtwissenschaft in ihrem Hauptrichtungen und Aufgaben kritisch erörtet" (Berlin: Hertz, 1886).

[4] *Vide* Gebhardt: "Geschichtswerk und Kunstwerk" (Breslau, 1885).

Naturally, art represents the beautiful, while history, on the contrary, recounts real events which are not always beautiful. But events are only partially perceptible to the senses. Their inter-connection, the spiritual significance within them that endows them with life and truth, has to be sought for and revealed. To discover the animating spirit of events and explain them by the light it affords, requires little less than the creative power of a poet. For the spirit of events is only to be discovered by an effort of the imagination, whereas the historian's imagination must be guided, curbed, and corrected by reality and experience.

"The poet may create his personages, but the historian is bound to take his personages just as he finds them. He must investigate their true spirit, discover their motives, and thus find the explanation of their acts. Fancy cannot supply the historian with facts, but gives him instead the help he needs for the due comprehension and reproduction of historic realities. But he must beware of any tendency to colour facts with any notions or fancies of his own, in order to achieve some forced and untrue effect. If he be capable of piercing to the kernel of events, then he will discover their hidden treasures, their animating spirit. Thus he will discern the harmony of facts in spite of their apparent incoherence, being able to reconstruct their organic unity from the ruins of the past—will show his artistic power by making that harmony clearly visible to our eyes." So we see that while, according to Professor Seeley, the historian who is content to narrate events *falls* from science into literature, according to Gebhardt he *soars*, on the contrary, to the sphere of art.

As a general rule, the only result derived from all

these opposed theories is that those who seek to prove that history is an art are necessarily led to show to what extent it differs from art, while, on the other hand, those who would prove it to be a veritable science are forced, nevertheless, to acknowledge that the help of imagination is continually required for the correct interpretation of history, inasmuch as the true spirit of events is seldom discovered save by a gift of divination that is rather a gift of historical creation than a strictly scientific proof.

The same view, in substance, was clearly and repeatedly upheld by Professor von Ranke. For this celebrated writer maintains that history is at once an art and a science. Like any other branch of study, he says, history has to perform every office of criticism and research, while at the same time it is bound to afford as much pleasure to the reader's intelligence as any other kind of literary work. Nevertheless, since the main duty of history is *truthfulness*, and it must narrate every event exactly as it occurred, its predominating character is scientific.[1]

The verdict of so great an authority ought to have settled the dispute, in Germany, at least; but this was by no means the case. During the same year in which Gebhardt's short essay appeared, Herr Almann produced one on the same theme in Sybel's *Historische Zeitschrift*.[2] This author maintains that, undoubtedly, history is a science, in that it claims the right of judging the value of individuals and of events, and of defining their position in the sphere of facts and ideas, all which has nought to do with art. If history should have a literary, and perhaps an

[1] Von Ranke, "Samtliche Werke," vol. xii., p. 5.

[2] "Ueber die Wissenschaftliche Geschichtsdarstellung"; *vide* No. iv., 1885, of Sybel's Review.

artistic shape, the same rule may be applied to philosophy, without its being changed into an art. History must investigate, compare, and criticise events; how then could it be regulated by the principles of beauty? So we should reject the false idea that by an exercise of fancy the historian could master the connection of events and the spirit that binds them together. Only by research can such results be obtained. Even in the statement of facts it is not always possible to follow the rules of art. Are we to leave corroborative proofs unmentioned to preserve the homogeneousness required in a work of art? Hence the idea of artistically written history is no longer compatible with the advance of modern science.[1]

In the same Review another writer, Herr Moritz Ritter, flies to arms against those who wish to extend the field of history so as to make it comprise the study of society *en masse* and of culture as a whole, thus obliging historians to be versed in all the sciences. The State, he maintains, is the central point of historical research, which only treats of the individual as regards his relation with the State. A similar and more fully explained theory is to be found in an Introductory Address by Dr. D. Schäfers, Professor of History at the University of Tubingen. The State, says the author, has been, is still, and will ever remain the central point of the innumerable questions of which history must furnish the solution. Only from the State can history learn how to arrive at an accurate appreciation of particular events.[2]

[1] Sybel's *Historische Zeitschrift* (1885), *vide* "Studien ueber die Entwickelung der Geschichtswissenschaft."

[2] "Das eigentliche Arbeitsgebiet der Geschichte." *Vide* Introductory Address of October 25, 1888 (Jena: Fischer, 1888).

To gain some idea of the number of different sciences men have attempted to intermix and unite with history, one should refer to the previously quoted work of Professor Lorenz, or, better still, to that of Professor Bernheim, which forms a complete and most learned *Manual of the Historical Method.* In combating his numerous opponents, the author deals the hardest blows at those who attempt to confuse history with political science, with sociology, and even with natural science, and to this end would force it to give exclusive attention to the mass of the people and culture in general, while neglecting individual components of the mass and consequently neglecting those psychological currents, movements, or crises which are essential parts of history, nevertheless.

History, Bernheim tells us, should give the same attention to the mass of the people as to the individuals composing it, or serving as its guides, seeing that the subject of history is man in so far as he is a self-conscious being, acting in and upon the social body. History is, accordingly, a social science, but is neither sociology nor political science. At first it was solely concerned with material facts; later on, solely with psychological facts, through which it sought to explain everything; finally, it embraced both orders of facts, and this was the birth of real modern history, which is mainly directed to the spiritual connection and explanation of facts. For this purpose its chief study is given to the successive developments and conditions of the State. But whereas the acquirement of this knowledge is the final object of history, for political science it merely serves as a means of ascertaining the genesis of certain general types, and consequently discovering what modifica-

tions it might be advisable to make in existing States.

One may treat the science of politics either from the historical or the juridical point of view, but must never confuse it with the other sciences to which it is related. Thus, too, in precisely the same manner, sociology treats of the development of society, not as its end, but merely as a means of ascertaining its constituent elements, of studying its different organs and their respective functions, together with all the typical varieties of social forms. For sociology has nothing to do with individuals, nor with psychological movements; while these, on the contrary, form an integral part of history which makes no search for general types. Both politics and sociology must be based upon history, but should not be confused with it.[1]

The constant need of arriving at truly scientific accuracy with regard to matters of history has not only led to an attempt to study it on the same method that is used for the natural sciences, but also to the endeavour to transform it outright into a natural science, even as Max Müller had tried to transform philology.

It was through his attachment to this theory that Buckle was finally led to deduce the character of the civilisation of ancient India from the rice that formed the staple food of its inhabitants; that of the Egyptians from the dates they devoured; that of Brazil, previous to the discovery of America, from its use of Indian corn; while, in the same way, the illustrious Du Bois Reymond, who was the chief supporter of this theory, was led to carry on a discussion with

[1] Bernheim, *op. cit.*, chaps. i. and iv., pp. 59–97. Here the author likewise attacks the writers who attempt to confuse history with philosophy, anthropology, and ethnology.

Liebig in order to ascertain whether the fall of the Roman Empire was to be attributed to the Romans' ignorance of phosphoric acid, which would have served to restore the fertility of their exhausted soil, or rather to their ignorance of gunpowder, since the use of it would have enabled them to repulse with ease every barbarian attack. But, in spite of much valiant support, the theory has been persistently and effectively combated both by Lorenz and by Bernheim.[1]

In almost the same words as Lorenz, Professor Bernheim states that, undoubtedly, history is a science, but that the laws of history cannot be confused with the immutable and impersonal laws of nature. Time, place, the diversities of human character, human intelligence and will-power, serve to alter social facts, which are more complicated than natural facts and essentially different from them. Whoever should fail to take this into account would sink into ridicule in the same way as Buckle. But all this does not serve to prove that history is an art instead of a science, if the real characteristic of science be the strict investigation of knowledge and truth, of substance instead of form. Indeed, form is of quite secondary importance in history, which must frequently dispense with the artistic setting that can only be employed when treating some period that is thoroughly well known in every detail. But there are certain entire periods which are still so obscure as to preclude all possibility of artistic treatment. These are precisely the periods which now demand the most careful research.

[1] Professor Du Bois Reymond's essay is entitled "Kulturgeschichte und Naturwissenschaft." It was first published in the *Deutsche Rundschau*, vol. iv., No. 2. *Vide* the long account of it by Lorenz in Part III. of his work, "Die Naturwissenschaftliche Geschichte" (Du Bois Reymond), pp. 133–170. *Vide* also Bernheim's work, chap. i., pp. 70–83.

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Hence, recent improvements in the method employed have only widened the gap between history and art by giving the first an increasingly scientific character. The modern historian is not satisfied with knowing what facts occurred and in what manner, but would also ascertain in what way this or that fact is connected with the general development of the history of the world and the human spirit. Yet there is no hope of learning from history such laws as may be deduced from ideas and from general principles. Personal qualities and the exercise of free will play too large a part in it, prove too many exceptions to the rule. History is not, nor will ever be, an exact or a natural science. Its laws can only be partially ascertained, inasmuch as we only have a partial knowledge of the groundwork of historical facts. In many cases we possess mere shreds of facts, and always of such a kind as to preclude the employment of either the simply inductive or simply deductive method.[1]

Here the question might be asked, If this *scientific* method be neither inductive nor deductive, but an ill-defined mixture of both, are we not indirectly and unconsciously driven to again acknowledge our need of the very kind of artistic divination and invention that was to be entirely relinquished? Nevertheless, leaving aside for the moment a question that will be frequently urged anew, might we not rather inquire if it is really any use to be always raising fresh difficulties which simple common sense would help us to avoid? Could any one be made to believe that Aristotle's "Politics" or Spencer's "Sociology" was an historical work, that the "Annals" of Tacitus was a treatise on philosophy or natural science? Yet the dispute is still going on, and the combatants are highly-gifted men,

[1] *Vide* the previously quoted passage from Bernheim's work.

and some of them have produced historical works of great value. What does it all mean?

Possibly some illuminating hint regarding this extraordinary fact may be gleaned from an essay by Erhardt, which, in point of fact, is merely an account of William Humboldt's famous pamphlet on the duties of the historian.[1]

According to Humboldt, the historian is bound to give a clear and exact narrative of all that has taken place, and at the same time must explain the significance and inner spirit of the events he describes. Of the facts in themselves one sees but a part—the outer part; but the spirit uniting the facts in question, determining their value and constituting their historic truth, at first sight escapes our observation, for it cannot be discovered without research; so, to achieve its discovery and make it visible to the reader's eye, the historian must exercise his imagination *as though he were a poet*. Nevertheless, he must exercise it in a different way, inasmuch as he is tied to reality, subject to the tyranny of the fact, which is insufficient, however, in itself. Hence, the historian requires a special aptitude of his own. The poet can embody his ideas in a semblance of reality; the historian must employ his ideas as a means of *discovering* the truth of facts; he has to *seek* the reality of his theme, whereas the poet may *create* it. Starting from particular facts, the historian discovers in them the ideas which alone make them comprehensible to him. The real and ideal are confused together in history, since every fact has its inherent idea. The laws of history consist of these inherent ideas, yet cannot

[1] Erhardt, "Wilhelm von Humboldt's Abhandlung 'Ueber die Aufgabe des Geschichtschreibers,'" in Sybel's *Hist. Zeitschrift*, No. 111, 1886.

be wholly reduced to causes and effects, as are the laws of nature. Inorganic nature is ruled by mathematical laws, animate nature by physiological laws, and history by psychological laws. But history cannot be duly interpreted by psychology alone. This would accord too much importance to the individual, who, if isolated and considered apart from society, would remain incomprehensible. Therefore one must study facts in the mass in order to find the fundamental ideas leading to the conception of a design for the world's government. These ideas, as manifested in individuals and in nations, constitute their special character. Language, art, science, and religious beliefs are all different manifestations of the ideal, although in them it assumes no personal shape; for all such ideas, while acting on, are superior to, the individual. We do not possess ideas, but are possessed by them and are truly subordinate to them. Even as mathematical laws, as, for instance, the law of gravitation, would necessarily exercise the same rule over any material world, however different from our own, so, too, ideas would be the ruling principle of every spiritual and moral world, and would always constitute its history. This is all brought about in three ways: Firstly, through individuals; secondly, through ideal *formulæ;* thirdly, through primary ideas (*Urideen*), which act spontaneously by their own innate strength, and belong to a higher sphere than that of things earthly, individual, or finite.

This essay, while revealing the lofty mental qualities of its author, clearly shows the influence of the German philosophy of the period. After reading it attentively, one conclusion is forced upon us. If, as Humboldt says, ideas lie in facts and constitute their life—if it is the office of the historian to seek for and

discover them in facts—then to learn whether history be an art or a science becomes a question of signal importance. Were it proved to be an exact and precise science, it should end by revealing the world of ideas to us in the surest way. But if, on the contrary, history be an art, all hope of such revelation will be lost. This serves to explain, at least in some degree, the obstinate attempts that are continually made to give greater emphasis to the scientific value of history by enormously exaggerating that merit, in order to establish its closer relation with this or that science of an exact and definite nature; or indeed, to confuse it, if possible, with such science.

I would not go so far as to say that writers holding these views completely realise the effect of their words, nor that their efforts tend to this preconceived end. But I think it is not altogether impossible that, even without expressing or being aware of the feeling, they may be unconsciously urged onwards by the hope of discovering the secret that has hitherto eluded our search. Nevertheless, in order to escape the risk of making useless new attempts and being led astray ourselves, the moment has come to try an entirely fresh road. Instead of continuing a theoretical discussion which even the best-skilled combatants have, as yet, failed to bring to an end, let us try to dissect some of the chief transformations through which history has successively passed. For those transformations may perhaps enable us to discern the elements of which history is composed, and thus attain to a fuller and juster appreciation of its true nature and purpose. This may seem to be a digression, but I hope that, in the end, it will help us to arrive at a more trustworthy solution of the problem with which we are concerned.

II

As Professor Lorenz rightly asserts, the eighteenth century was the age of a vast change in history. For, in fact, it imported into history a far greater share of the philosophic and critical spirit and of methodic doubt, together with a large freedom of judgment. Far more attention was given than at any previous time to the history of all nations and all periods, thus opening out an immensely wider field of observation, and always and everywhere endeavouring to throw aside fables in favour of truth. No preceding age had formed so clear an idea as this of the moral unity of mankind, and also it was the first to acknowledge the law of progress. But, in many respects, its attitude and its intellectual tendency were decidedly anti-historic. First of all, as the fundamental idea of the eighteenth century, French philosophy consisted in believing the human mind to be a *tabula rasa* that received every impression from outside by means of the sensations—the very idea illustrated by Condillac in his description of a statue that by its possession of the five senses is changed into a living man: how could such a theory point out the way for discovering from facts the ideas and guiding spirit of mankind? Besides, the writers of that period tried to study history on the method that was applied to the natural sciences in which all had been trained, and consequently the vast difference between the laws of psychology and the laws of nature entirely escaped the notice of those learned men.

Nor was this all. The fundamental conception of history, being the conception of man, the individual, developing in the course of centuries step by step

with the formation and development of the social body, was impossible at that period. For even in studying the earliest times, the eighteenth-century thinkers only perceived the man of their own day, the reasoning, philosophic man, able to account for his actions. The unconscious yet rational work of the masses, the spirit of this or that nation, the force of tradition, entirely escaped them. Accordingly, the origin of languages, of mythologies, of social bodies, remained a mystery of which some plausible explanation was suggested that, besides being totally untrue, was often the absolute negation of every idea of history.

In his wide-spread theory of the "Social Contract," Rousseau takes for granted that before being members of any social body primitive men already possessed so definite an idea of its constitution as to be able to hold meetings to discuss the foundation of society according to the principles of justice and reason. To us, on the contrary, it is clear that, until they learnt to speak, men had no ideas at all, and only acquired them on gaining the faculty of speech. As Max Müller has told us: No idea was ever known to wander about the world seeking the word to express it, nor a word in search of its idea.

The men of the eighteenth century did not regard language to be, as we regard it, the primitive, spontaneous, unconscious product of the human intelligence, which, in acquiring it, learnt at the same time to think and to speak; instead, they considered language to have been *invented* by human beings, who before knowing how to speak had already such lucid ideas as to consult together and decide by what sounds those ideas should be expressed. The same rule was applied to the mythologies of the world, for to men

of the eighteenth century even these were no spontaneous products of the popular fancy, but, as usual, the inventions of philosophers of primitive antiquity, who presented abstract ideas in the guise of fables in order to teach them to the masses, who could not have digested them in any other form. In short, the only method then known of discovering the explanation of every rational element in society, language, and mythology, was that of carrying back to the earliest dawn of history the man of the eighteenth century, or, as Taine puts it, "*la raison raisonnante.*"

It was also deemed imperative at that time to make a return to the so-called "state of nature," in which justice, humanity, and goodness held sway, instead of being corrupted by the influence of society, literature, and art. But was not this theory a topsy-turvy version of history? for history shows that man's natural state is the social life, in which alone can we learn to be moral, honest, and civilised. But what of the ideal that we are straining to reach, if it be thus thrust behind our backs instead of being held before our eyes? Does not the theory turn history wrong side out? What, too, was the leading idea of the French Revolution? Destruction of the past and of all existent society, in order to re-create the latter on a basis of pure reason. Was not this idea also the sheer negation of history, which shows us how the present is born of the past, and that both are indispensable for the development of the future? For history teaches us that the total destruction of the present would plunge us back into barbarism.

The whole of the eighteenth century teems with ideas of this sort. But of all the writers of that period Montesquieu was the one most bent on discovering a continuous design in history, and the one

who discerned the relation between history and politics. His "Spirit of the Law" (*Esprit des Lois*) is a collection of historical remarks which, although often profound, are badly fitted together. The general idea that prevails in it is the influence of climate on man. Montesquieu recognises exterior actions, but fails to see the inner spirit or feelings by which they are animated and given effect. The institutions he delineates with such shrewdness and truth are shown side by side, as it were, but never brought in touch with one another. No notice is taken of their historic evolution nor of their connection with the human spirit, which is supposed to remain as unchangeable as the institutions themselves. The world, he says, is governed by reason, but it is reason in the abstract, that never assumes a concrete shape. Yet, in his own day, he was accused of having a too faithful and almost superstitious devotion to history. When he expounded the nature of feudalism in his great work, Helvetius was shocked, and cried out: "*What the deuce does he want to teach us by his treatise on feudal tenure?* (Mais, que diable veut il nous apprendre par son traité des fiefs?) What new form of legislation can be derived from this chaos of barbarism that has been respected by brute force, but must be swept away by reason? He should have tried to derive some true maxims from the improved state of things that is at hand." [1]

Filangieri predicted in his "Science of Legislation" [2] that England was doomed to some awful disaster because she respected the past and disregarded the injunctions of the new French philosophy that was to

[1] *Vide* the "Letters" included in most editions of the "Esprit des Lois."

[2] "Scienza della Legislazione."

change the face of the world. But for France, who was following the prescribed course and rapidly altering the old order of things, the author predicted the swift and peaceful advent of a golden age, in which nations would be governed by reason alone. Certainly the law of progress that the eighteenth-century philosophers were the first to see, the first to believe in, should have brought them very near to and almost in touch with the idea of historical evolution; but this was not the case. Turgot almost hit upon the idea, but after alluding to it in learned and eloquent terms, scarcely went any further. Condorcet, on the other hand, was the apostle of progress, expounding its principles with the heroism and zeal of a martyr. It is impossible to read his book without deep emotion, for when the author was writing it he already knew that only by taking poison could he escape the guillotine. Yet, although in the shadow of death, he still proclaimed the speedy and peaceful triumph of justice, reason, and the welfare of mankind. But even in this book the law of progress is treated rather as the assertion of an imperfectly explained fact and a proof of unshaken belief in it, than as the demonstration of a positive law. Besides, according to his book, progress was not the result of a continuous development of the human mind by means of some historical process, but was merely due to the general increase of knowledge.

But we must stray no further from our principal theme, so will conclude this digression with some brief words on a writer who was the foremost representative of his age, gave the fullest expression of its ideas in his philosophical and historical works, and in virtue of the latter was raised—even by his contemporaries—to a pinnacle of well-deserved fame.

What was the real purpose of Voltaire's celebrated "Essay on Manners"?[1] Was it intended to reduce to order the jumble of facts called history? Its real subject is the spirit of the human race. Hence, our attention should be wholly devoted to the history of culture. But what is the fundamental principle, what the final conclusion it arrives at? "Il resulte de ce tableau, que tout ce qui tient à la nature humaine se ressemble d'un bout de l'univers à l'autre; que tout ce que peut dépendre de la coutume est different, et que c'est un hasard s'il se ressemble."[2] Therefore, it is nature that constitutes the unity of history, while manners are the cause of its variety. How, then, can the fact be explained that such a variety of customs should proceed from so unchanging a nature? And, how and where are the laws of nature to be discovered, if it be true, as the author tells us, that all is an integral part of the *machinery* of the universe, and that "nothing can happen which has not been *pre-ordained* by the Supreme Architect"? All this, however, is left unexplained and unexplainable in Voltaire's new science of history. For of the true spirit of events, or of the laws by which these are ruled, not the faintest perception is shown. Strings of facts are recorded in succession without a hint of any connecting link between them, and the observations of which they are the cause or the pretext seem to be no more than casual and random remarks, having no real bearing on the facts related, and nothing to do with one another. In short, the chief object of this work

[1] "Essai sur les Mœurs."

[2] "This exposition brings us to the following result: that everything which depends from human nature is always the same all the world over; but that all things dependent on custom are different, and only resemble one another by chance."

would seem to be that of making history a means for securing the triumph of the new philosophy and a weapon for attacking the past instead of investigating and interpreting it.

As M. Faguet has justly said, "Voltaire's chief defect is his radical incapacity for getting outside himself" ("son ineptitude radicale à sortir de soi"). This defect pervades his character; it rules his conduct; it constitutes his politics, his history, his philosophy. "Every historical event that is alien to his own mode of thought he holds to be false. By limiting his view to men of his own days Voltaire is a bad judge of mankind."[1] Some parts of his work defy definition. For it is an intermittent philosophy of history that, forgetting its special purpose, lapses into what should be plain history at every step—yet is nothing but history of the unfinished, anecdotic, fragmentary kind—in order to offer us a series of amusing and satirical little tales. "*À tout prendre c'est un joli chaos.*"[2]

Then from Taine's more extensive inquiries we learn that in every branch of eighteenth-century literature personages of different races are treated as pure abstractions, although the public is heedless of the fact, because "it lacks the historical sense and takes for granted that man is everywhere and invariably the same."[3]

In Voltaire's Essay, as also in the works of Robertson, Gibbon, and others, we find not only learning

[1] "À ne voir que l'homme de son temps, c'est sur l'homme que Voltaire se trompe."—E. Faguet, "Dixhuitième Siècle, Études littéraires," p. 233. Paris, 1890.

[2] E. Faguet, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

[3] Taine, "Les Origines de la France Contemporaine," vol. i pp. 218–219.

and critical judgment, but even correct accounts of institutions. Everything, in short, "save the souls of men. . . . The gift of sympathetic imagination that enables a writer to enter into others' feelings is the gift most denied to the eighteenth century." [1] Yet to the historian it is absolutely indispensable.

III

This state of things produced two results. First of all, that which bore the name of philosophical history in the eighteenth century could never become scientific history. It neither sought to discover the ruling laws of events nor the spirit inspiring those events; it was merely a collection of remarks, showing more or less sagacity according to the writer's powers. But although historical facts served as pegs for the author's observations, these were not deduced from those facts, but rather from the philosophical creed of the time, for which history was always used as a prop. Nor was it possible to alter this tendency, without altogether changing the philosophical basis on which the culture of the eighteenth century was founded.

On the other hand, since the moral aspect of mankind was held to be invariably the same, *i.e.*, invariably that of the eighteenth century, historical narrative was unavoidably doomed to frigid, colourless monotony. It has been justly remarked that uni-

[1] *Vide* "Les Origines de la France Contemporaine," vol. i. p. 260: "Il n'y manque si ce n'est que des âmes. . . . L'imagination sympathique, par la quelle l'écrivain se transporte dans autrui, . . . est le talent qui manque le plus au dix-huitième siècle."

versal history was then reduced to a lengthy procession through the philosophical salons of Paris. For Greeks and Romans, Catholics, Protestants and Crusaders, feudal lords and working men, were all precisely alike. The writer threw the same veil over them all. His sceptical intelligence was quite incapable of comprehending any fraction of the religious struggles which had agitated mankind. Even so learned and sagacious an historian as Gibbon, after minutely relating those struggles, only regarded them with smiling contempt, being totally unable to understand them himself, much less interpret them to others. Amid the continual mutation of events, nothing really seemed to undergo any change. Villemain was perfectly justified in bidding his pupils to observe that the tale of Mary Stuart's execution, as it was told by an unlettered chronicler of the time, gave a far clearer and more convincing idea of the scene than any most learned and finished eighteenth-century historian had ever succeeded in giving. Hence, we cannot feel surprised if eighteenth-century readers soon became bored and began to forsake historical works.

Now, were it true, as some writers have maintained, that the literary and artistic element is of slight importance in history, the consequences of its omission would have aroused little notice. On the contrary, however, the need of that element in history is proved by the fact that, when denied entrance at one door, it broke in through another by creating a new species of literature. For this I believe to be the primal cause that led to the birth of historical romance, and conferred on Sir Walter Scott—whom Manzoni called its Homer—such swift and prodigious popularity.

Scott's readers were scarcely wrong in declaring

that more true and living history could be learnt from fiction of that sort than from the scholarly, philosophical narratives of professed historians. Certainly, we find in those wonderful books Normans, Anglo-Saxons, Scotchmen and Englishmen, Crusaders, knights errant, Puritans and Cavaliers, all called back from the tomb to vigorous life, shown to us as they really were, and stirred by the passions they really felt. But while on the one hand all this clearly proved that the suppression of local colour, of all characterisation of different periods and different passions, had had the same effect upon history proper as the excision, so to say, of some vital organ, which should have thereupon discovered a means of leading a separate life of its own, on the other hand, the question was naturally raised as to why the excised organ should not be allowed to live in its natural place as an integral part of the organism to which it belonged. If the historical novel could furnish graphic and vivacious descriptions, by mingling real with fictitious events, why should not history achieve the same effects while keeping strictly to the field of genuine and well-authenticated facts?

In the early years of the nineteenth century this was the problem attacked by the historian Augustin Thierry, who has left us a faithful account of his studies and ideas. During the time when he was crushed with grief at the humiliations imposed upon France by foreign invaders, all history, he tells us, seemed to him a struggle between conquerors and conquered. Searching for a theme that should allow him to give vent to his pain and express his political views, he thought to have discovered it in the Norman Conquest of England. "So I set to work upon it," he adds, "with great eagerness, but after various attempts, recognised

that I was merely falsifying history, by always applying the same fixed rules to essentially different periods. Overmastered by my own political ideas, I was trying to write history after the fashion of the eighteenth-century philosophers, that is to say, by deducing from the events I had to relate a systematic array of proofs in support of my own convictions, in order to give summary demonstrations, instead of detailed accounts." His preliminary researches, however, had inspired him with so much ardour for the theme he had chosen that the old method of treating history could no longer satisfy him, though for some time he failed to hit upon a new path. Just then Walter Scott's novels fell into his hands, and were a real revelation to him. For here, there was, at last, a true, dramatic, and palpitating narrative of the conflict of different races. Scott's powerful imagination seemed, he said, to raise men of the past from their graves and make them live and move before the reader's eye. "My great admiration for that splendid writer rose to a still higher pitch when I compared his prodigious knowledge of olden times with the dry, colourless learning of the best known modern historians. Accordingly, I welcomed the appearance of his masterpiece, 'Ivanhoe,' with downright enthusiasm. In this work Scott's eagle eye flashed light on the period with which I had been occupied for three years. With the daring of genius, he showed us how the Normans and Saxons, conquerors and conquered, still stood face to face and defiant, on English soil, a hundred and twenty years after the Conquest. He had depicted with poetic colours an episode of the lengthy drama that I was striving to build up with the historian's plodding pen. My eagerness and confidence were both redoubled by the species of indirect sanction conferred on my aspirations by one whom I

regarded as the greatest master of historic intuition that the world had ever known." [1]

So, with renewed courage, Thierry finally hoisted his flag of reform in historical studies: proclaiming open war against unskilled writers who neither discern nor investigate; against writers devoid of imagination who can neither depict nor reconstruct the past; against the best famed historians of the philosophical school on account of their obstinate dryness and wilful ignorance of the origin of nations. In taking this path he proposed to construct what he styled his *epopée*, by describing the Norman Conquest, and going back to its primary causes in order to come down to its final results, and then depicting the great event itself in the truest colours and from all the different points of view he could possibly discover. "In a word, my aim was to produce a work of art that should be also a scientific work, to construct a drama with the help of materials obtained through earnest and most scrupulous research.[2]

But there is a very sad ending to this tale. Thierry ransacked the archives with such unremitting devotion that, on the point of beginning to write his book, he became totally blind. But he never lost heart, and "making friends with darkness," as he puts it, he returned to his work, and by means of dictation was able to finish the masterpiece that was to prove the foundation stone of a new school of history.

[1] "Que je regarde comme le plus grand maître qu'il y ait jamais eu en fait de divination historique."

[2] "En un mot j'avais l'ambition de faire de l'art en même temps que de la science, de faire du drame à l'aide des materiaux fournis par une érudition sincère et scrupuleuse." *Vide* the Preface to "Dix Ans d'Études Historiques," par Augustin Thierry. Brussels, 1835.

He concludes with these words: "If, as I believe, the progress of science is to be numbered among the glories of our land, I have given as much for my country as any soldier who has been crippled for life in the field of battle. . . . And had I to begin over again, I should again take the road that has brought me to this pass. Blind and suffering, without any respite or hope of recovery, I can still witness to one point, that, as coming from me, admits of no doubt: that there is something in the world of higher value than any material enjoyment, nay, even than bodily health, and that is—devotion to science." [1]

Thus was the new road discovered that was soon to be followed by Sismondi, Prescott, Macaulay, and many others, including Professor Ranke himself, who was the first to mould the great school in its definite shape, and acknowledged that he owed the first idea of it to Thierry.[2]

If the exclusion of the artistic element from history gave rise to the historical novel, it was only natural that the latter should lose its chief *raison d'être* and begin to decline as soon as historians gave practical proofs of artistic colouring being quite compatible with fidelity to truth, even in narratives confined to well-authenticated facts. At any rate, from that moment historical fiction rapidly declined in importance and continued to lose ground until it almost entirely disappeared, to be shortly replaced by novels based on

[1] *Vide* Preface to "Dix Ans d'Études Historiques," by Augustin Thierry. Brussels, 1835.

[2] Sybel tells us, in his Commemorative Discourse on Ranke: "Er selbst hat uns gesagt, er sei durch Augustin Thierry's glanzende Darstellungen angeregt worden." He also added that certain historical blunders in Scott's works had first impelled him to rely solely on documentary evidence. *Vide* Sybel's *Hist. Zeitschrift*, of 1886, No. 1, p. 467.

the study of character and manners as well as by psychological romance. Thereupon the public ceased to think that history was best learnt from fiction; indeed, by way of charging any historical work with inaccuracy or misstatement it was enough to call it a romance. Even the illustrious Manzoni, author of our Italy's best and most famous historical novel, passed the severest sentence of all on works of that kind. "My readers," he says, "frequently asked me whether Rodrigo, the 'Innominato,' and other characters in my book were historic personages who had really existed, or if I had invented them out of my own head. This proved to me that they looked upon historic and poetic truth as two entirely separate things, and forced me to conclude that the historical novel, in seeking to bind them together, was driven to serve two masters, and, being thus prevented from obtaining the intrinsic unity indispensable to every work of art, it is necessarily a false kind of work that is bound to perish. Neither could the epic poem, which also mingles history with poetry, be produced as an evidence in its favour, seeing that the epic was born when history and poetry were one and the same thing to the mind of primitive man. In fact, as soon as the difference between the two began to be clearly recognised, even the epic poem gradually lost its ancient originality, until most of it vanished outright." As for ourselves, without harping any longer on this point, we need only remark that Manzoni's excessive modesty made him give too much weight to it. When the historical novel first arose it met a real need of the times, that accounts for its apparition and explains its merit, which, as in other works of art, entirely depends on the genius of its creator.

From a certain point of view the new school of

history may be considered as a return to an older one, and more particularly to that of the Italian Renaissance, which first gave history a basis of critical and conscientious research by investigating the causes, effects, and interconnection of events, and then proceeding to represent and describe them in a lively and eloquent style.

But there are various points of difference between the old school and the new, one of which is really striking. Ancient writers were mainly occupied with the contemporary history of their own country. For this reason, as noted by Hegel, the historian's spirit being identical with the spirit of the events he related, it was much easier for him to understand and interpret them. The modern historian, on the contrary, treats the whole history of the world, and, by preference, the periods farthest removed from his own times. Unlike the ancients, we consider, in fact, that no one can write on contemporary history, since an author who has a share in it cannot know it as a whole, nor be able to judge it with sufficient impartiality. Special preparatory studies have to be made first of all; it is necessary to stand somewhat apart from a period in order to obtain a general view of it without being over-influenced by its passions. This is partly a consequence of the very different conditions in which our minds work, but is also partly owing to the different nature of modern society as being infinitely more complex than that of old times, which was so simple a unit that the intelligent spectator could take it all in at a glance, while of modern society he can see only a part, and frequently no more than the smallest fraction. This is why the writer of to-day prefers to investigate some past period most remote from his own, to master it by critical research, to follow its ramifications in

every direction, to call it back from the tomb, breathing fresh life into it by force of his own imagination, and so capturing the mind of his reader as to be able to transport him through time and space.

IV

But why should such evocation of the past fill the historian's soul with the well-nigh heroic enthusiasm we have found in Thierry? How could an effect of this kind be produced by the narration of long-vanished scenes which can never again be repeated? In other words, what is the purpose of history, and, above all, of narrative history? This inquiry again leads us back to the dispute that was the original cause of this essay. In 1855 Thiers produced a new volume of his "History of the Consulate and the Empire," and gave a description in the preface to it of the special disposition and qualities that the historian should possess. First of all, he must give a faithful reproduction of the past without any additions of his own. He must play the part of one of those immense mirrors which we are now admiring, he says, in our Great Exhibition, and which are so perfectly transparent, and reproduce everything so clearly, that we seem to see the Exhibition itself through the frame that binds the invisible glass. But Michelet showed his disapproval of this simile by exclaiming: "What! Is the historian to have neither a soul nor a conscience? Is he to remain untouched and unmoved by the perpetual struggle between virtue and vice, between liberty and despotism? No! The historian should teach men to practise the goodness that he trains his readers to admire. History is a continual lesson to us, for it

teaches us that virtue and freedom are destined to triumph in the end. Face to face with that lesson, how were it possible to remain unmoved?"

It is plain to see that this is only another phase of the old and long-continued controversy as to the true purpose and nature of art, which, according to some, should be a mere imitation of nature, a mirror reflecting reality.

But what natural object served as a pattern for the cathedrals of Florence and Milan, for Giotto's bell-tower, or for any of Beethoven's symphonies? Why, then, does photography fall short of art, when it undoubtedly gives the most accurate reproduction of nature? How is it that flowers and fruit, even when rendered so faithfully in wax as to deceive the observer's eye, still fail to be art, while an oil painting of the same, which deceives no one, may yet be a work of art? Because, first of all, every work of art must come to us as a creation of the artist's mind. He has to transform the natural objects he studies into the substance of his own spirit before he can reproduce them in such wise as to make them the expression of his own feelings and ideas. Therefore, just as with history, so too with art; to the first definition of it a second has been opposed which declares that the scope of art is the ideal, is truth, and is virtue! Art has to teach us that virtue will triumph, has to teach us to love it. But the champions of this theory forgot that art would thus be reduced to an abstraction which is proper to science, and also forgot that form is a substantial element of art. For Raphael and Titian the ideal signifies colour and design; for Beethoven sound; for Shakespeare it means the imagined figure, the character, the poetic individualisation. For Plato the beautiful is an ideal, but for the poet the beautiful

is embodied in a Beatrice or a Laura. Therefore critics belonging to the "abstract" camp were told in reply: "You, sirs, confuse science with art, which has no right to inculcate morality, this instead being the function of the philosopher or preacher of religion. In Manzoni's great romance goodness was personified in St. Charles Borromeo and Father Christopher. If these characters are true creations of art, their example alone will suffice to incite us to goodness. But the poet can also bring before our eyes the most atrocious of crimes, the cruellest persecution of innocent victims, the most savage passions. Phaedra, Myrrha, Macbeth, Philip II. of Spain may be treated in the loftiest verse. All nature, all history afford material for the artist's inspiration. But should he solely depict brutal passions, naked crimes, and nothing more, he is outside the realm of art, because he is outside human nature. For beneath every guilty deed he should make us hear the voice of conscience that is never silenced until the evildoer has ceased to be human. Accordingly, the poet may describe the triumph of guilt, provided he remember to represent the criminal at those moments, however brief they may be, when he is alone with his conscience and feels the terror of it. In this wise the poet is no mere *realist*, but is true to reality."

If the two contrary definitions of art quoted above be defective by reason of their onesidedness, both the theory that insists on a bald reproduction of actual facts and the opposite one that merely tries to deduce from them some moral or political lesson are equally onesided with regard to history. Supposing that in order to write a biographical study I were to jumble together all the details of my hero's life and describe them as they came, I should only produce a useless,

mechanical book, instead of a contribution to history. For an exact and complete idea of my hero's character could be given by any one who knew how to choose just a handful of facts illustrative of the man's character, and by means of these show us the hero as he really was in life. Who, for instance, can doubt that, were I able to write a truly graphic description of Piero Capponi at the moment when he defied Charles VIII. and tore up the treaty before his face, I should thus give a far juster and better idea of his individuality than by recounting a thousand petty circumstances in which there was nothing to mark the difference between him and his fellow-citizens? Therefore the biographer is bound to confine himself to facts that throw the truest light on his hero's character.

The right choice of facts implies force of judgment, force of judgment some definite rule and purpose. And what applies to the history of an individual may be equally applied to that of a nation. Who would dream of telling haphazard, without sifting one's materials, and, consequently without judgment, without any fixed rule, all the deeds of the Greeks and the Romans? But what should be our guiding rule? We see before us the art, science, and poetry, the politics, institutions, and laws of the Greeks, and we have to gather together and fuse all these elements into an organic whole, if we really wish to write the history of Greece. Yet what possible connection can there be between a Greek tragedy and the laws of Solon, between Plato's "Dialogues" and the columns of the Parthenon? Nevertheless we are aware that all these possess in common a certain *something* that we distinguish by the name of *Grecian*, that defines their common origin and kinship. Only when we

have contrived to obtain a clear idea of the Greek spirit that was the true source of all those diverse manifestations, only then can they be all united and co-ordinated in our mind, and, springing to life before our eyes, enable us to gain a clear and comprehensive view of their historic meaning. Historical facts are only those which reveal the character of some man, some people, some period, and teach us to comprehend their value, by determining their proper position and respective importance in the progression of human events. Such appreciation, however, cannot be gained at first sight; the historian must patiently seek it out. This is the creative part of his work, for which, as Humboldt remarked, he has to employ scientific research and a gift of imaginative intuition. Yet, so far, no moral nor political lesson is to be gleaned from all this. In fact, if I read some authentic and vivid account of a Spanish *auto-da-fê*, or of one of the atrocious massacres perpetrated in Parisian gaols during the Reign of Terror, I can enjoy the historian's skill without wishing to learn his views on morality or politics. But at this point the old question again rises to our lips, *i.e.*, what does it all come to? Why take such pains to call back from the tomb long vanished personages and peoples? What is the use of resuscitating their evil passions and crimes? Are not Professor Seeley and all who share his views perfectly justified in declaring that history of this kind is merely a story-book for the amusement of children?

The surest way of discovering the purpose of history and of ascertaining what we really want from it can never be that which, starting from more or less hypothetical theories, derives its conclusions from those theories. It were far better to analyse our sensations by surprise, as it were, at a moment when some

historical work is exciting our warmest admiration, and observe what we are admiring and what is passing through our mind at that moment. Then we shall perceive that we have a curious aptitude for travelling in imagination to every period of time, to the very heart of every race, and of thus being enabled to live the life of men of past ages, and almost to assume their personality. For in the course of our reading we can feel ourselves in turn to be Greeks or Romans, Crusaders, conspirators, or reformers. The greater the author's eloquence, the greater his power of taking possession of our souls, of transporting us through time and space; the keener our pleasure, the greater our admiration and firmer our belief that our author is the truest of historians. Of course, our preference for this or that century, this or that people, will vary according to our years at the time, and according to the changes in our mental appetite. The legendary origins of Greece and Rome are devoured by children with an innocent, eager delight that will fade later on, when, as adults, we only regard those once loved tales as subjects of scientific inquiry. But, in short, the world's history seems to us to be a special world of our own, our own intellectual property, inasmuch as no part of it is alien to our spirit. He who lacks the power of transporting himself into the past can understand nothing of the past. But that mental journey once accomplished, we gain a new consciousness of our own being, and have won, so to say, a deeper insight into the recesses of our own nature.

And now another link between history and poetry again comes in view. The youthful reader who is enjoying his first taste of Shakespeare is spell-bound by the poet's magic power. His soul rapt

in ecstasy, he no longer sees the room he sits in nor the table supporting his wonder-book; he is transformed into Romeo, Macbeth, or Hamlet, is now a prince, now a king, a conspirator, every personage in turn that the poet has created. All seem so near to him, so quickly identified with himself, that one might think their author had actually discovered them in the depths of his reader's soul. It is ever at the moment of our hottest admiration that we feel most assured that the poet must have surprised our most jealously hidden secrets to be able to tell us what we had always thought, but never expressed even to ourselves! However, as far as this goes, the mystery is not quite insoluble, for the poet does not create at random.

He is a student of human nature, and its various passions are personified in his characters. Therefore, the greater their poetic truth, the nearer they are to us human beings, and seem to be, as it were, a part of ourselves, of the very substance of our spirit. The poet reveals a vast treasure lying hidden within us, of which until now we barely realised the possession. Still, although this may explain the poet's power over us, it cannot explain the power wielded by the historian. For the latter creates nothing: his facts and personages are neither the product of his own brain nor of ours; he seeks and discovers them in the archives. The poet, on the contrary, can personify human passions and ideas by his power of imagination; he not only creates his characters, but can mould them in the shape best adapted to give them an air of reality. Provided that he obeys the laws of human nature and truth, in other respects he is free to do as he likes. On the other hand, the historian cannot alter facts, which he is

bound to describe as they really occurred, nor is he permitted to alter in any way the motive or spirit of those facts for the sake of improving his description of them, but must rather study to discover their inner meaning, in order to tell us exactly what it was. The artistic merit and force of his work entirely depend on his being able to combine both those elements and, without falsifying either in any way, to make us perceive the invariable harmony between real facts and their real inner meaning. How is it, then, that, notwithstanding their diversity of method, both history and poetry can produce much the same effect upon us?

In order to answer this question, we must recur to a previously quoted instance. If I wished to write a biography of Dante or of Alfieri, let us say, how am I to set about it? I have first to read their works, collect all the details of their life, and arrange these in chronological order; next I try to derive from this mass of materials the character, mental gifts, and temperament of my protagonist. But then it occurs to me that I cannot possibly understand what the man really was without first acquiring some knowledge of the times in which he lived. Thus, to write Alfieri's life, I must make a study of eighteenth-century Italy, which cannot be understood unless one is familiar with the philosophy of the period, and likewise with the French Revolution, which in its turn can be neither explained nor understood without a preparatory study of the Ancien Régime. In the same way, it would be useless to attempt a life of Dante without knowing all the history of the Italian communes, the Guelphs and Ghibellines, the Empire and the Church, of scholastics and feudalism, and the whole of the Middle Ages, and thus going back to ancient Rome and the barbarian

invasions. Accordingly, no individual can be explained apart from his times, no society apart from its past, or apart from the other social bodies by which it was surrounded. The past has changed into the present, different social bodies interact on one another, their different forms of culture become mingled together. Thus begins to take shape the so-called "spirit of the times," which is afterwards personified in some individual man, who cannot therefore be fully understood apart from his times. And, just as this "spirit of the times" is only to be explained through the past of which it was born, so mankind is solely to be understood and explained through the history of the past. In fact, were you to imagine history with all the Greeks and Romans blotted out, you would also find that part of your mind was a blank. For all our ideas of politics, jurisprudence, philosophy, and art are derived from the Greeks and Romans; our whole education is still based on their works. Again, without the Revolutions in France and Italy, should we men of this day be precisely what we are? Thus the history of the whole universe is required to explain the individual man, because, more or less transformed, all history lives in us human beings. Therefore, as it lives in us all, why should we marvel at our power of transporting ourselves back into past times and living once more in them?

In studying the history of Greece we not only read the tale of a vanished past, but also that of a society, a civilisation that, although transformed, still endures within us as a constituent element of our mentality. Thus we are reading the history of a part of ourselves, and gain a clearer appreciation of that part on seeing it developed, magnified, and surrounded with its pristine glory, as it first flashed upon the world

through the deeds of the Grecian people. And what applies to one nation may be applied to all the rest. When the English first began to study Sanscrit and the Vedas, who could have foreseen the flood of light those researches were destined to throw upon the origin of language, of mythology, and the whole civilisation of the Western world? Thus, in reading universal history we learn to recognise the process by which our own intelligence has been gradually built up. It has been justly remarked that even as the geologist can trace the history of the transformations of the globe from any chance handful of earth, so too the philologist, on analysing some phrase you have uttered, will find in it the record of the transformation of tongues. The same may be said of society in the mass and the individual who belongs to it, since both alike are undoubtedly an historical product of the past. If, in showing the magic-lantern to a child, we hold the lens close to the wall, he will only see a tiny point of plain white light. But as we gradually draw the lens farther away the small point expands into a circle of light, that, as it breaks up, develops a number of fantastic, multicoloured figures in different attitudes. Yet these numerous figures already existed in germ within the small point of white light. In fact, if we move back the lens closer to the wall, the figures disappear and the point of light is all that is left of them. Now let us imagine for a moment that this point is a conscious, living being. So long, however, as he is only a point of white light he cannot be conscious of the varied wealth of form and colour that lies hidden within him; yet he cannot fail to perceive it, when we draw the lens farther out. Something of the same sort occurs with regard to the study of history. While the poet reveals to us the

countless ideal elements of our nature, the historian merely shows us all the material elements from which, in the course of ages, our mind has been gradually formed.

V

This is the point that arouses hopes—often too exaggerated—of the possible transformation of history into an exact science of the human mind that might ultimately reveal the secret of our moral and intellectual life; this is the point whence fancy soars to its highest flights. The succession of different forms of society is undoubtedly ruled by some law, that, although as yet imperfectly known to us, must be very closely related, in any case, to the law that determines the formation and development of our mind. As Pascal has said, humanity resembles a great man who constantly learns and makes progress. Vico told us that, if we truly desire to comprehend the times most remote from our own, the primitive times when languages were born, mythologies built up, and the first popular songs were sung, we must become as children again for the moment, since the human race, in its infancy, thought, felt, and spoke like a child. As even at this day to children and savages, so at that day to primitive men, the stars, seas, rivers, and mountains were actual living creatures, speaking a language that, albeit strange to us, was easy and familiar to them. Even as the individual man, the human race goes on from one age to another ever subject to the same law, and so, too, in their various, multiple order of succession, the different forms of society.

If we glance at the chronological sequence of these forms of society and compare them with those still

to be found here and there on the earth at the present day—starting from those of the more barbaric kind and ending with those which have attained to the highest progress—we shall find that, although distinctly different, both series maintain an unbroken connection. So, too, if in forming a museum we should arrange on one side in chronological order specimens of all the agricultural implements employed by mankind, such as those obtained from excavations or described by ancient writers, and on the other side a progressive collection of all the agricultural tools used at the present day in different parts of the world, starting from the least civilised nations and ending with England and America, we should see that the two collections tallied wonderfully with one another. Therefore the same path has been pursued in time as is now pursued in space. Nor has this been proved in agriculture alone. Certain great ethnologic-historical museums have been arranged in accordance with this theory and have demonstrated its accuracy.

On examining the lake dwellings of prehistoric times, archæologists find them to be almost identical with those inhabited at the present day by more or less barbarous tribes who are still subject to the same conditions. The pre-historic *graffiti* (scratched outlines) which were the first attempts at art among primitive races are identical with those still produced not only by savages, but also by young children of our own race. Many students, when seeking to discover the genesis of certain ancient legends and traditions, have gained the desired explanation by examining the same phenomenon and its results among our own lower classes and our own children, after the manner first suggested by Vico. In order to investigate the early history of the Hebrew race

and obtain accurate knowledge of its customs, certain writers have gone to the East, and by travelling here and there among the nomadic tribes of Asia, have gained much new light on the subject. Nevertheless, one cannot admit the possibility of finding ancient forms of society still in existence at this day, nor of discovering anything that should even distantly recall the splendour of those which represented the fine flower of humanity at more or less remote epochs. For all that can be discovered now among the less civilised races are merely hybrid forms still lingering on the outskirts of more advanced social bodies which have already assimilated some portion of the culture in which the spirit of the present age is fully visible. This culture itself will also disappear later on, and give place, in the same way, to the formation of other social bodies and other races.

In another and very different order of events we learn from physiologists that the human fœtus, before arriving at its definite shape, passes through a series of embryonic and transitory forms, which, in the inferior animals, are found to be permanent and more complete. Thus, according to the law of evolution, even animal life seems to have gradually passed through various forms before arriving at that of man, just as the human fœtus passes rapidly through those various forms before assuming its own special shape. According to other writers, something of the same kind occurs in the progressive development of our moral and intellectual life. For during this too, they tell us, we pass rapidly through the various stages that the human race has slowly traversed in succession. Between the hours of our life and the ages of humanity there is a continuous relation that appears to the student's eye to become ever closer and more decided. Social bodies

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follow one another in succession according to a law that is identical with that of the human spirit, which, being the outcome of history and developing step by step with history, is therefore closely connected with it.

But all these and other similar speculations or theories—whichever one prefers to call them—do they belong to science or to fancy? Certainly, one cannot declare them to be scientific, since they have too much of the individual and fantastic element, take different forms in the hands of different writers, and, so far, we possess no method capable of exactly defining and demonstrating them. Nevertheless, they suffice to foster our hopes, and continually sharpen our desire to found a genuine science or philosophy of history that would unerringly lead some day to the discovery of the laws by which society and the human spirit have been gradually developed and finally explain in some manner and to some extent the mystery of our moral and intellectual existence.

On closer examination of the matter we can see that history consists of three elements. First of all, there is the element of fact, inquiry into which is the main concern of historical learning, since it seeks for and discovers facts by means of scientific methods which make more assured progress from day to day. Secondly, there is the presentment of facts that is peculiar to historical narrative, and this, being in no small degree a literary labour, makes repeated demands on the imagination, not, however, for the purpose of altering facts, but in order to make them live before our eyes in their true shape. Lastly, there comes the third element that gives rise to continual disputes. For it is requisite to discover the logical connection of events, the laws by which these are ruled, namely, that which Humboldt called the ideas and spirit of events, by which alone

can their historic value and meaning be fully understood. These three elements can never be entirely separated one from the other, since—albeit in very different proportions—all three are indispensable to every historical work, even if it be simply one of learned research. It is the third element, however, that should mainly constitute the science of history. Of course, while it is merely a question of discovering the plain connection of facts, within certain limits, the problem may be solved in a sufficiently assured way. But when we seek to discover the ruling laws of events, the general design into which they are fitted—when we try to obtain positive knowledge of the relations which undoubtedly exist between historical facts and the human spirit, we are instantly assailed by endless doubts, endless divergences of opinion and of system. At one time we had unbounded faith in a true science or philosophy of history. Next came a period when the possibility of such a science was totally denied. Nowadays one may venture to assert that this hope is again coming to life, though in a very different shape and within humbler and far more restricted limits. Why and how has this change been brought about? To attempt even a partial reply to this question, it is necessary to go back a few steps and call attention, first of all, to some of the chief attempts which have been made to arrive at the solution of the problem.

VI

The idea of seeking to find a general design in history and the fixed laws by which it is guided to a definite end had neither occurred nor could possibly occur to the ancients, who had no clear conception of the unity

of mankind. They were so thoroughly at one with the society and civilisation to which they belonged and owed their being, that they could neither acknowledge nor appreciate the value of any other state of life. To them every stranger seemed a barbarian. To the world-conquering Romans, civilisation consisted in accepting the laws, institutions, and ideas of Rome —becoming Romans, in short. But with the advent of Christianity there finally arose the conception of one God, Creator and Ruler of the universe, in whose sight all men are co-equal. Thus also rose the idea of a design in history, informed by some superior mental power guiding it to some definite end. It has been frequently asserted that this idea was first expressed in St. Augustine's "City of God" and the "Histories" of his disciple Orosius, written at the Saint's command for the fuller explanation of his theory. These "Histories," in fact, served to initiate the so-called school of theology that was carried on throughout the Middle Ages, that afterwards found in Bossuet a graceful and eloquent interpreter, and that gained new followers at a still later period. But, on closer examination, we shall see that this idea was substantially a negation of the true historical method and made it impossible. Man became a blind instrument, without personal value, in the hands of the Lord, who drove humanity as a coachman drives horses. Apparently everything could be easily explained, but in a way that explained nothing. Nations rise and fall because God either supports them or withdraws His support. The laws ruling events are to be sought in the Divine intelligence, into which no mortal may penetrate.

Of course, the fundamental error did not consist in the idea of a God, the Creator of mankind and Ruler

of history, but in the method employed to enforce it. Galileo, too, believed in a God, Creator of the world, Author of the laws of nature; but he found out those laws by studying nature and natural phenomena. The theological school, on the contrary, despised mankind, despised society and its laws. The earthly life had no value for this school, save as a preparation for the heavenly life. While imagining that it derived all things from the Divine intelligence, the school merely excogitated *a priori* a design that it applied artificially to history later on. For, according to this theological school, history's final aim was the triumph of Christianity, and this was the sole point to be considered. No people had any historical importance excepting those who aided that purpose, namely, Hebrews and Christians.

Thus, nearly the whole of its attention was concentrated on a single part of history; it despised the Pagan civilisation of Greece and Rome, and even in the fragment of history with which it was concerned saw only one element, and accordingly gained no clear idea even of that. How is it possible to understand religious creeds without studying them in relation with the whole culture of the people who professed them? How can we understand mythology without some knowledge of the Greek poets? How comprehend Christian theology without some acquaintance with Greek philosophy? And how could we possibly understand or explain history if we despised society and refused to seek out and examine its laws? Then, too, the final conclusion reached by this school is that the perfect man created of God fell by fault of his will and reason. All history, though declared to be the work of God, is therefore reduced to a continual

process of decay that man vainly tries to check. To turn back is the only way of salvation. Society is no benefit, it is an evil; the ideal is not before our eyes, but behind our backs. It is the law of progress reversed. Nevertheless, this conception was so closely connected with the philosophical ideas, culture, religion and society of the Middle Ages, that nothing less than a complete political and intellectual upheaval could suffice to free them from it. During the Dark Ages, in fact, philosophy was the handmaid of theology; lay society was subject to the ecclesiastical; the Pope was the sun, the Emperor the moon, receiving its light from the sun. The theological school was a necessary consequence of this general state of things, doomed to endure while it endured, and fall when it fell. But the revolution finally came. Our communes emancipated the lay classes, classical learning freed man's reason, Italian eyes began at last to turn from heaven to earth.

The first sign announcing the coming of a new era was the glorious height to which Italian literature leapt with the "Divina Commedia," whose author was likewise the first to expound a new conception of society and history in his book "De Monarchia." Though still in scholastic form, this volume already shows a clear conception of a lay society independent of the Church, founded on right which is apart from religion, but equally with religion has its primal source and basis in God. The Emperor confronts the Pope, and, even as the Pope, derives his power directly from God as the representative of the law and of lay society; he is the heir of the Roman Republic and of the Roman Empire, whose glorious history proceeded from God, as likewise proceeded both Christianity and

the Church. Thus nature and society, paganism and history, resume their rights, and a new horizon opens before the human mind, that henceforth will pursue its road unchecked. In fact, after no long interval we find Marsilio of Padova asserting the superiority of the sovereign to the Pope in his "Defensor Pacis." But the final results of this grand intellectual transformation, that was so vigorously promoted by the humanists of the fifteenth century, were exhibited during the Renaissance, which brought us an entirely new method of studying history and society.

Not only had men now learnt to turn their eyes from heaven to earth, not only had their contempt for antiquity given place to the most unbounded admiration for it, but Providence itself seemed to have vanished from history; one might even say that it no longer existed for writers of the Renaissance period. Everything now is the work of man, of the individual, rational man, conscious of his own power. Great revolutions are the work of some statesman; even the barbarian invasions are always the work of malcontent Roman generals in pursuit of revenge; the Crusades are the work of some Pope or preaching friar. And this man is always of the same kind. Machiavelli maintains and repeats it on every occasion. He seeks a way of changing the Italians of his time into ancient Romans of the Republican period, and believes that all this can be easily effected, provided men will adopt the laws, the military and political institutions of Rome. This conception of man remaining fixedly unaltered amid all the vicissitudes of history and perpetual changes of society, had a very prolonged existence. It is, substantially, the

same conception that prevailed, as we have seen, in the eighteenth century, although with certain decided variations. The Renaissance, having no special philosophy of which it sought to insure the triumph, was not bound like the eighteenth century to make all history subordinate to any special system. The Renaissance never sought to discover the origin of society or of institutions; on the contrary, it neglected the greater part of those problems, in which the defects of its own theories would have been most clearly discerned. The Renaissance men of letters gave almost exclusive attention to the contemporary history of their own land; consequently, they were in the same position as the ancients. The historian's spirit was identical with that of the events he described, hence, having no need to divest himself of his own personality in order to enter into other times, it was easier for him to attain to historic truth, a quality, in fact, of which the sixteenth century has bequeathed us many admirable and truly classic examples.

It has been justly remarked that when Voltaire, for once in a way, applied his pen to the history of almost contemporary events founded on documents of the period, that is to say in his "Life of Charles XII.," he then displayed a power of brilliant narration and graphic presentment of real facts to which he never attained in any other historical work.[1] This book formed a grand exception, for, as we already know, it was the rule in the eighteenth century to try to run through the whole history of the human race, and solve the hardest problems of primitive times by means of contemporary philosophy and contemporary mankind, which was held to be un-

[1] *Vide* Taine, "Les Origines," &c., vol. i. pp. 258–259.

changed from time immemorial. This system, the earliest germ of which may be detected in the Renaissance period, experienced many vicissitudes, many modifications, and endured to the beginning of the French Revolution by being identified with the new philosophy. Consequently it was also very closely connected with the political, social, and moral ideas of the period, so that even then no different course was open to it without some new and decided transformation of human thought, such as was about to be achieved, as we shall see, by Immanuel Kant. But even before his day, Italy had already produced a thinker who, without starting a new system of philosophy, had a true prevision of the fresh line that historical research would be forced to adopt. G. B. Vico (1668–1744) lived in Naples, amid the frenzy for legal research which produced, among other fruits, the literary and juridical works of G. O. Gravina and the "Civil History" (*Storia Civile*) of Pietro Giannone.

Down to that time Vico had only studied law, without thinking of history, but now the question occurred to him: "Since justice is always and invariably the same, why is it that different nations have such very different laws? How was it that one and the same people, such as the Roman people, could have deserted the laws of the Twelve Tables at various epochs of its long history in favour of the very different laws of Imperial times?" His answer to this was that, although the abstract idea of justice remained always one and the same, the feeling of justice in the minds of men was continually changing in accordance with their change of temper, and with the degree of civilisation to which they had attained. Therefore laws, being the pro-

duct of men's feeling for justice, were bound to change as this feeling changed.

This thought of Vico's gave birth to his "New Science" (*Scienza Nuova*), in which historical events serve to explain the human mind, which, forsaking its former abstract immutability, shows itself to be undergoing a continual alteration of its inner essence. Thus psychology and history were first discovered to be related and to be mutually illuminating.

For we can have no comprehension of history, Vico says, unless we seek its explanation in human nature. Man, created of God, has formed this world of nations, that, accordingly, is only to be understood by the study of human nature. The source of all the worst historical blunders consists in failing to recognise the continual mutability of the spirit within us, and attempting, with the feelings and ideas of cultured, civilised beings, to explain every event in the early history of rough, ignorant men who were governed, like children, by their senses and imagination. The only way to understand them is to change our point of view by recurring for a moment to our own childhood.

The primitive wisdom of peoples, or, according to Vico, the poetic wisdom, is the impersonal labour of unconscious masses, who, stirred by a quasi-Divine instinct, perform rational work without as yet knowing what they do. Only by a long and painful process of historic evolution can they recognise what they have achieved. Thus we find the explanation of the Divine influence and of human influence upon the course of history, and it is for this reason that history affords the most decided and certain proof of the existence of God and of the reality of the spirit. Hereby, too, is explained the force of

tradition; the birth of myths, the origins of languages and poetry, of social bodies and institutions, are also made clear to us, together with the full meaning and value of history.

All this was a true divination of the course that science was bound to follow later on. But Vico neither possessed the basis of a new and original philosophy nor of vast historical knowledge. His system of philosophy was of so antiquated a kind as to almost approach the scholastic form. As to his learning, it was only profound in the ancient history of Greece, and to a higher degree in the whole history of Rome, and above all in that of Roman law, in which his prophetic insight frequently anticipated the later discoveries of skilled experts. Consequently his "New Science" is based on Greek and Roman history, although his conclusions were subsequently applied to that of the whole world. Then, too, the peculiarities of his style, which was seldom felicitous and often very obscure, together with the enormous success soon achieved in Naples, as throughout Italy, by the philosophy of eighteenth-century France, caused Vico and his works to be left in oblivion for many years. Undoubtedly, however, he was the first discoverer of the road that was to be afterwards followed by Wolf, Niebuhr, and Savigny. It is hard to decide what knowledge they may have had of the "Scienza Nuova," or to what extent they made use of it. In any case, they belonged to another school of philosophy, took part in a new literary movement of a totally different character, conducted their inquiries on a safer and more scientific method, and with a far stronger basis of learned research.

VII

The idea of historic evolution that Vico had divined, and that was opposed to the whole philosophy of the eighteenth century, began to be dimly recognised in various ways as an indispensable part of science even before it came to be a clearly formulated result of the new philosophy of Immanuel Kant.

A proof of this may be found in Herder's "Ideas on the Philosophy of History" (1744–1803). This eminent writer, being endowed with the true critical spirit, sought to discover the various idiosyncrasies of different nations from their primitive poetry—more particularly from that of the Hebrews—from their legends and traditions, and by combining the study of history with that of natural science, described in very eloquent words the glorious drama of progress that, starting from mineral and vegetable growths, finally arrives at the human animal. This progress that, while changing in its nature, never changes its road, marches on throughout history, from people to people, continually urged forward by some law, as of some almost Divine impulse, regarding which, in spite of the author's genius and the magic of his style, we never gain any definite idea; for Herder seems rather to be a poet under the spell of some high inspiration than a scientist seeking to discover the truth by force of sound judgment and infallible method. Hence, in this respect at least, he was much inferior to Vico, although greatly his superior in learning, literary power, and fascination of style. On the other hand, we find in Vico a clear and settled idea of the standing relation between

historical facts and the human spirit, and of how, to his view, the science of history is based on that relation, whereas, according to Herder, it would rather appear to be the offspring of a splendid impulse.

But he who gave the death-blow to seventeenth-century philosophy and set the human mind on a totally fresh track was Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). There was some truth in the saying that the philosophical revolution initiated by Kant had the same importance in the world of science as the French Revolution had in the outer world of facts. Undoubtedly he imagined a new philosophy, started a new science of history, and also a new literature, in which Herder, too, played a part.

It is not true, Kant tells us, that the human mind contains only that which comes to it from without, and nothing else. Were that the case there would be no experience. When I see a man who has died of a wound I immediately ask, Who has killed this man? My senses only serve to show me the corpse; but my question implies more—an effect naturally presupposes a cause. Nor is this idea the result of experience, which merely guesses (or supposes): it comes from the mind, which, combining the idea with the sensation, makes experience possible. Therefore one must invert the terms of the question as it was formulated in the eighteenth century. The human mind is not formed and moulded by the external world; we only come to know the external world through its taking the form of our own mind. The new philosophy must take example from Copernicus, who, being unable to explain the planetary system by making the sun and stars revolve round the earth, succeeded in explaining it by making the

earth and stars revolve round the sun. So, instead of seeking for the explanation of the human mind in the external world, we should begin by examining our mind itself. If the external world can only be knowable to us through its adaptation to the laws of the human mind, it is only by investigating the value of these laws that we can learn the true value of our knowledge of external things. I am compelled to have a conception of objects in space and of events in time, not because the ideas of space and time are given me by experience, but because they are the laws of my own mind. Therefore, only by studying these laws can I learn the value of ideas of space and time. I am the seal, as it were, upon which the head of Cæsar is impressed. Wax applied to that seal will always bear the impress of Cæsar's head, but this does not imply that the wax itself must be really of that shape, and incapable of taking any other.

On the first exposition of such ideas, as set forth in the "Critique of Pure Reason," the *tabula rasa* of the eighteenth century vanished altogether. The human mind recovered its individual rights, and experience naturally sought its co-operation. Nevertheless, this human spirit was left, as it were, self-enclosed. The passage from ourself to outside ourself, in order to learn the objective value of our ideas and cognitions, was still blocked, and we ran the risk of falling from materialism into scepticism. We shall see how Kant sought to avoid this danger in his "Critique of the Practical Reason." Meanwhile, however, the result was that the world appears to us, is understood by us, not in its reality, but in the form attributed to it by our own mind—that is, in the only form in which we can conceive it. Fichte

told us outright that the world was a creation of our own mind, and went so far as to amaze his students by the celebrated announcement: "To-morrow, gentlemen, we shall proceed to create God."

Hegel, on the contrary, thought to solve the problem by suppressing every contradiction between what is me and what is outside me (the Ego and the non-Ego). Both these, he said, were a manifestation of the Absolute, of which he sought to find the laws by studying the human spirit. In this way logic changed its character altogether: it became the foundation and groundwork of a new metaphysical system, consequently of the science of phenomena and of history. This gives us the laws, not only of our reason, but also of the universal reason to which both the external world and the internal world of the spirit are equally subject. The Absolute, which is the animating principle of the universe, is no abstract idea; it constitutes the reality of the Ego and the non-Ego, it is in a continual state of becoming, that constitutes its life and the life of the world. Nature and history are only to be explained by the Absolute, which is manifested in them and continually creates them. The philosophy of history became an integral part of the new philosophy, because it was based on, and indeed deduced from, the laws of the Absolute, which both in history and in man for the first time becomes conscious of itself. In this way not only was the close connection of historical events with the thought and conscience which give them life and substance very clearly distinguished, but also the design and inner purpose of history were made equally clear, inasmuch as history is a progressive manifestation of the Absolute. For by its perpetual state of becoming the Absolute explained the law of

historic evolution, and thus led to the discovery of the rational element to be found in impersonal action as well as in personal achievement. At the root of both alike the Absolute is ever present. All this was received as a new and tremendous revelation of long unsolved problems. It is unnecessary here to remind the reader of the extraordinary influence once exercised by that philosophy on culture in general, and more especially on the study of history. Even at this day one can find traces of that influence in many writers who are not only fierce opponents, but even despisers, of Hegel's theories. Indeed, we often find that quite unconsciously, and by an opposite method, they arrive at the same positive conclusions as Hegel.

However, to return to our immediate subject, the philosophy of history, it is a certain fact that from the moment that this philosophy was acknowledged to be an integral part of the new philosophical system it was destined to live and die with it. Its method being entirely *a priori* naturally conduced to a systematic construction that docketed established facts in more or less artificial order, for the purpose of fitting them into the system they were to illustrate and confirm. But, after all, our real knowledge of historical events is extremely limited, seldom accurate, and seldom clearly detailed, while numerous facts remain totally unknown, or have only come down to us in a garbled form. Accordingly, as the *a priori* method was naturally unfitted to start new researches for the discovery of unknown facts in history, it often had the result of garbling history to suit the historian's own views. Thus we find that Friedrich Schlegel, a man of rare talent, great learning, and following a philosophy very different

from that of Hegel, was enabled by the use of an equally systematic and *a priori* method to arrive at totally different conclusions as to facts in his own work on the philosophy of history.

Then, too, as the new science of history was based on, or rather deduced from, the laws of the Absolute, it could not rest satisfied with giving more or less plausible interpretations of already known facts, but was even led on to demonstrate that everything in history must have necessarily occurred as now set forth, and by no possibility in any other way. Hence, on every occasion when archæology, philology, or learned research had proved beyond dispute that certain events had followed a different course, this new discovery not only set facts right, but damaged the method of research, and shook whatever faith it might have inspired. On the other hand, such men as Wolf, Savigny, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Niebuhr, although adherents of the same philosophical and literary movement, nevertheless, by using an *a posteriori* method, succeeded in founding a new school of history that, with far humbler pretensions, daily obtained more solid and brilliant results. Languages, mythologies, jurisprudence, ancient institutions, primitive societies, being patiently examined on a scientific method and with rigorous research, served one and all to open a new road for science and lead it on to more rapid and decided conquests. This school, without attempting to erect a systematic philosophy of history, was, nevertheless, essentially scientific, inasmuch as, while studying events, it likewise investigated the laws by which these are ruled in their relations with the human mind, of which they are the product, and upon which they react by continually causing changes in it. Once investigated in this

fashion, historic evolution quickly brought to light the unconscious reason of primitive times; it demonstrated in a manner entirely beyond dispute that all mythologies, languages, and social bodies are born and developed according to fixed laws. The inevitable consequence of this discovery was that the Hegelian method of historical research was now abandoned and well-nigh despised as being utterly incompetent to lead to any result such as had been obtained by the other course. Thanks to the new school, all moral science was gradually changed, inasmuch as every branch of it employed the historic method with continually increasing success. Starting *de facto* from a new conception of mankind and the human spirit, this altered route led round to the same goal.

Man was no longer considered, as once, to be always the same unchangeable being in every period and every situation, nor to be invariably possessed of the same faculty in every age, every race, or every degree of civilisation, but, on the contrary, as continually altering from day to day, and that accordingly he must be studied in this state of continual change, continual becoming. Thought was no longer an airy abstraction apart from the real world; for human thought had created the reality of historic events, constituted their life, was their only interpreter. Beauty, goodness, and justice were no mathematical formulæ of the human mind, to be solved through contemplation of the Absolute; they were the living, vitalising, creative principles of art, of jurisprudence, of practical morality, in all of which they might be discovered and studied under a concrete form. The conception of this continuous manifestation and movement of thought creating historic reality through the

human instrument which it daily transforms had been originally started in the Hegelian philosophy. Hegel deduced it from the Absolute and imposed it on history, whereas the new school tried to discover thought in the events of which it sought to ascertain the laws and value, only announcing these to the world when enabled to prove them with scientific accuracy. Thus, together with history, philosophy, jurisprudence, politics, criticism, education, and all the moral sciences were endowed with new life.

VIII

At this point it was very natural to think that if history, after revivifying all knowledge by the use of its new method, might become a truly strict and accurate science, it might prove equally possible to end by constructing an accurate science of human nature and human thought. On the contrary, however, it was just at this moment that the question noted at the beginning of this essay first began to be hotly discussed. In fact, while the reaction against Hegelianism was continually increasing on the one hand, on the other there had arisen the philosophy styled Positivism, of which Auguste Comte was the most effective exponent. Comte explained it as follows : At first all the sciences had a systematically metaphysical tendency, but moved uncertainly hither and thither for a long time, until they struck the positive and only scientific road by which real progress could be made. Physical science attained it through the experimental method, by studying natural phenomena and investigating their laws, that is to say, by renouncing all search for the Absolute, that

essence of things which, eluding the grasp of reason, cannot possibly be considered as a part of knowledge, and therefore can be of no value to us. Thanks to this new method, the physical sciences were kept within their natural limits, succeeded in discovering the certainty which they sought, and became substantially renovated. Now the moment has come for the renovation both of moral and social science, which are still in the metaphysical, systematic, and scholastic stage, and must be emancipated from it in the only possible way, viz., by the historic method, which will give the same help to them that the experimental method gave to natural science. The deeds of history are the deeds of the human spirit. Therefore, in order to study this spirit, we must keep two conclusions in view, which are, as it were, two closely connected roads, namely, psychology and history, and we are able to compare the one with the other. We are no longer forced to remain eternally shut up within our Ego; we have also a non-Ego. Hence we may test and re-test everything, just as in natural science, where all is subject to verification.

When Galileo believed that he had discovered the law of falling bodies, did he deduce its logical consequences, in order to extemporise a system after the manner of the schoolmen, whose philosophy was a creation of their own intellect? No! Galileo tested the fall of heavy bodies, interrogated nature, and only when he had ascertained by this means the truth of the law did he attempt to deduce its consequences. This is what the moral sciences must now do by the aid of the historic method. Putting aside all search for the Absolute we can ascertain the truth of the laws of thought by comparing psychology with history, which

constitutes the outer world of thought. Everything, in fact, which takes place within the human mind finds its external manifestation in history, where it assumes an independent objective aspect. Should I wish to understand the beautiful, and set to work to contemplate the perennial idea of it, I merely contemplate an idea of my individual mind, and remain absorbed in an abstraction of which it is impossible for me to learn the true value. Such ideas are the creations of my own mind which keep me imprisoned in myself. But if instead—so Comte goes on to say—I reflect that beauty is the creator of art, and if I seek out its laws and manifestations in art, then I shall know the beautiful as it is shown in historic reality and in the world of art, which is its true kingdom, independently of me, outside of me. Thus I shall be enabled to prove whether or not I had conceived a true idea of it. Even then, however, I shall have merely gained laws and facts without any absolute knowledge of the beautiful. But this is all that physical science can do; indeed, it is the characteristic of all the sciences, which are bound to remain within the limits of reason. Physical science is ignorant of the nature of electricity, of light, and of force, yet has invented the telescope, microscope, telegraph, phonograph, steamship, and railway engine. And all this has been done through the knowledge and investigation of facts and laws. On the other hand, what did we learn from the endless scholastic dissertations on force and light or on the life of the universe? What, too, from all the systematic dissertations upon justice, goodness, and jurisprudence, upon the origin of language, or on the best form of government? Whereas, leaving all these aside, the historic method has given us the sciences of law, of government, of society, and of language.

Positivism, in short, was more than a new system of philosophy: it was an exposition of the new method by which the moral sciences also had progressed and been renewed—a fact which none could dare to deny. So these sciences steadily kept to that path, with ever improving results. Nevertheless there was much outcry against Positivism in the metaphysical camp, where it was accused of materialism and scepticism. What! cried the metaphysicians, are the nature of thought, the existence of God, the immortality of the soul to be regarded as negligible problems, non-existent for our reason? Does nothing exist save facts and laws? Is not this sheer materialism, sheer scepticism? Truly it might be asked at this point whether Galileo, on abandoning his quest for the essence of light and force, in order to seek only the laws by which these were ruled, could be accused of denying the existence of force and light. On the contrary, one might observe that if there be any philosophy affording assured and undeniable proof of the existence and high value of thought, it is precisely the philosophy of the Positivists. For surely, so long as my cognition of the ideas of beauty and goodness is merely derived from my own mind, it may be doubted whether these ideas have any real objective value outside my own mind. To my own definition of the beautiful a thousand different definitions may always be opposed. The idealist who believes in an absolute idea of goodness is contradicted by Bentham, who reduces goodness to a due comprehension of individual advantage; while other opponents likewise reduce it to the harmonising of public with private interests, and so on. He who believes in the idea of beauty eternal and absolute is opposed by the eighteenth-century philosopher who reduces all beauty to a

pleasant sensation, or by others again who judge it to be merely a vain illusion of no intrinsic worth. Thus one ends by doubting on all subjects, believing in none. But when it is proved to me, on the contrary, that the idea of the beautiful is that which creates the world of art, which without it would cease to be, and that this idea is quite independent of myself, obeying laws of its own, which may be discovered and demonstrated, how can there remain any shadow of doubt as to the real existence and value of the idea of the beautiful? When I have proved to you that the idea of justice gave birth to jurisprudence, that moral law is indispensable to the existence of human society —since this could not be conceived of, could not live without it—then what possibility can there be of doubting its value? Moral law will appear to be no less irrefutable than the universal law of gravitation, without which we could find no explanation of the planetary system. It is true that proving the existence of the good and the beautiful, and recognising their ruling laws, by no means implies that we know what they really are, that we can explain their essence, or have any positive knowledge of them, even as our knowledge of the laws of force cannot entirely explain to us the nature of force. Nevertheless, this does not attenuate the absurdity of attacking those who endeavour to distinguish between what is discoverable or explicable by reason and that which reason is powerless to explain. This is, indeed, the position that inevitably generates materialism and unbelief.

As Kant puts it: If, in order to believe in the existence of any object, it were absolutely indispensable for me to explain the nature of that object, in that case I could have no belief in the existence of force, light, matter, or mind. Yet many men are so

obstinately convinced that nothing exists for our minds save what can be explained and understood, that certain Positivists, exaggerating their own conception, and straying beyond the boundaries of their own creed, are constantly reiterating that only facts and laws have existence—that all else is beyond our cognition and should therefore be regarded as non-existent, at least for our intelligence. From another point of view, and with equal exaggeration, their opponents retort: If you deny that reason is able to explain the inner essence of the human mind, able to prove the existence or the nature of God, then you do not believe in God, do not believe in the soul or in the spirit: you wish to explain everything by means of matter. Yet these opponents forget, among other things, that no Positivist even pretends to explain what matter can be.

However, without pushing this inquiry any further, we need only say now that on the one hand Positivism was exposed to continual attacks, while on the other the metaphysical system became more and more discredited. But the historic method gained higher esteem every day, and historic research ever greater results; it almost seemed as though they had impressed their stamp not only on all the moral sciences, but on literature, art, and the modern spirit. In fact, historic romance, historic tragedy and drama, historic art, historic criticism were now first bestowed on us. It was declared that before learning philosophy one must study history, this being the only valuable part of it. It may be truly affirmed that during the last fifty years our literary and philosophical education has been essentially historic. This is chiefly owing to the now almost general conviction that by the historic method alone can progress be achieved in social and

moral science. Thus the hope has been increasingly nourished that as soon as a real science of history shall be founded, this will lead us some day to the true solution of the mystery of the human mind, of the mystery of the social and moral world.

IX

Already, however, there are visible signs of a reaction against the pretensions of the historic method. There are many reasons for this. Although the human mind may be content with merely knowing the laws of the natural forces which it applies to special ends of its own, without knowing anything of their real nature and unconditioned essence, it cannot be equally indifferent to spiritual phenomena. On the contrary, it is necessary for us to learn the nature, origin, and destiny of our spirit, in order to comprehend what we are and whither we go, seeing that all this has a direct influence even on the conduct of our life and its moral value. On this point, neither reason nor conscience can feel resigned to uncertainty and doubt. The problem forces itself upon our attention and insistently demands a solution. Hence, it behoves us to examine the nature of the arguments against the historic method in order to gain a clearer view of the point to which this method has brought us, and if there be no means of going farther. The problem itself cannot be easily solved, but a critical study of the method employed may throw fresh light upon it, if conducted with impartiality.

The fact of the method having represented man to be the product of history had undoubtedly the enormous advantage of leading us from abstract ideas to

real life and compelling us to study and analyse man as he truly is. But can we be sure that this suffices to explain all that we require to know of our nature? Is it enough to know that man is always changing and to study all the changes he passes through? Some writers believe that the last word has been pronounced when they say that man is only to be explained by his environment, since man is a product of the time in which he lives. But in a single century, in a single social body, there is room for many men, of every variety of character, for heroes, martyrs, or assassins, yet all these are equally the products of their period, born and developed in the same *atmosphere!* How, then, should it be possible to distinguish, comprehend, and judge all these various types of manhood without some critical procedure other than the historic method?

But to measure more exactly the weight of all objections that have been, or may be, raised, let us glance at an example drawn from the very quarter where the historic or (as some prefer to call it) the scientific method has won its best triumphs, and that is from literary criticism.

The old system of rhetoric, based on the conception of an unchangeable man, whose faculties seemed to be always the same, excogitated certain invariable rules, to which every work of art should be subject. The system often deduced those rules from one of its abstract ideas of the beautiful, often also from some supposititious dictum of Aristotle or from an equally supposititious excerpt from some immortal Greek poet. Thus there were prescribed rules for moving the soul to tears or to laughter, for producing both the lofty style and the light. Every tragedy, as also every epic poem, must have always a central figure. The

scene must remain unchanged, and the action of the piece must never cover more than twenty-four hours. With watch and measuring tape in hand, and by a very simple arithmetical process, every one could decide if a work of art were beautiful or ugly. These and other rules of the same sort obtained such implicit credence, that even men of genius, such as Tasso, Racine, and Alfieri, submitted to them, and were sometimes sadly hampered thereby.

At last, however, it was observed that if these rules might apply to the works of Greeks and Romans, which was not invariably the case, they certainly could not be applied to the literary productions of other countries. Where could you find the unities of time and place in Shakespeare's plays? Who was the hero of the "Divine Comedy," of the "Orlando Furioso," or even of the "Iliad" itself? Also, as soon as men began to study the Spanish drama, the Nibelungen cycle, and above all, the poetry of India, which has likewise its own special charms, it was recognised that in all these works the rules of rhetoric were completely ignored. Then historic criticism dawned upon us and widened the world's horizon.

Literature, men said, is the manifestation of a people's mind, the product of some given civilisation, and it changes as these change. Every people feels the beautiful in its own way, and therefore creates its own literature, the laws and rules of which must be sought in its history and intelligence. To apply to Indian literature the laws of Greek poetry, or *vice versâ*, would lead to chaos instead of to criticism. This inexhaustible, infinite wealth of beauty is not manifested in any single fixed form, but in an infinity of different forms. Then men began to study the litera-

tures of all nations, with due reference to the degree of civilisation of which they were the product, and thus obtained the explanation of their true value and significance. Great progress was accordingly made. History served to explain literature, and showed us its meaning, while literature rendered the same service to history.

But another and no slight question had still to be solved. Many works of art are to be found appertaining to some given degree of civilisation, and all in harmony with it, though certainly not all of equal value. Some are excellent, some very bad, yet all are the product of the same society. How can historic criticism decide their various degrees of artistic merit? The literature of Greece and that of India both undoubtedly stand in the same relation to the two civilisations of which they were born, and are equally faithful expressions of the national spirit of the two peoples who created them. But are they of equal merit on this account? And if not, by what rules are they to be judged? The rules of historic or scientific criticism—whichever you like to call it—can afford no help; another method is required. One must have artistic taste and judge by its precepts. But this is no longer the historic method, no longer scientific criticism. The latter, indeed, had always urged this objection: "Through artistic taste you will only achieve artistic criticism; that is, a personal and subjective decision. Your taste is not the same as mine, and consequently every critic will pronounce a different verdict. Instead, what we require is a safe and scientific method, a subjective mode of criticism. If another step is to be made, it will be always on the path indicated by science." Hence came the process of thoroughly dissecting works of art, analysing their

historical elements, and tracing these to their original *sources*.

The "Divine Comedy," said the critics, is the product of Dante's own period, and likewise of his individual degree of culture. Hence we must examine, first of all, the history of the politics, philosophy, and literature of his age ; then, afterwards, the acquirements, ideas, convictions, and political passions of the poet himself. We will examine the many varied mediæval legends concerning his wonderful journey to the three realms beyond the tomb, and thus we shall discover how much he derived, or did not derive, from those sources. We shall learn which were the traditions he knew, which Latin or Italian authors he studied, and to what extent he copied from them. In this way we shall obtain all the antecedents of the "Divine Comedy," we shall know exactly what the poet took or did not take from others, and shall avoid the too common error of those æsthetic critics who frequently praise an author most highly for what he had copied from other writers of whom they know nothing. What, too, is still more important, we are thus enabled to pierce to the inner essence of any work of art by an invariably scientific, objective, and sure method, that cannot be pursued when working haphazard at the dictation of individual taste. Therefore, away with all æsthetic, subjective criticism, now that by means of the historic method we have found the real way to place a work of art in its true relation to the civilisation that gave it birth, to analyse it most minutely, and define every element of which it is composed. What more could be desired? It may be so. But let us suppose, for instance, that you may have executed this task most thoroughly and completely, finding out all there was to be

discovered. How much will you know then, how much will remain unknown? You will have learnt everything excepting what the "Divine Comedy" really is, for in fact, as De Sanctis has said, you will have merely learnt its antecedents. That is, you will possess the material of which Dante made use, but you will not know in what manner he used it, nor how he transformed it into the very substance of his mind, and could thus reproduce it as a real *creation* of his own. By your method, you will have learnt to know only that which is not Dante's work, you will know everything save the real nature of his poetry. Assuredly, neither knowledge of his times nor of his sources will suffice to determine the intrinsic value of his work. None can feel any doubt of the enormous utility nor of the positive need of such researches, since without them it would be impossible to arrive at any definite critical verdict. Nevertheless, one should not expect from research more than it can give; one should not exaggerate things. Otherwise, you would be acting like the man who, having scraped clean the panel of the Madonna della Seggiola and then heaped its pigments on his palette, exclaimed, "Here is Raphael's work!" "But how is it, then," some one justly retorted, "that this red paint, which is only rough material on the palette, when applied by the *artist's* brush to the lips of the Madonna becomes a great thought, a creation of the painter's intelligence?" This is what can never be learnt by any historic method, yet this is precisely what constitutes a work of art. "Between myself and Raphael," said a copyist, "there is only a hair's-breadth of difference." He was quite right. But in that invisible hair's-breadth there stretched all the infinite gulf that divides the genius of an artist from the pedantry of a copyist, the gulf

that cannot be spanned by science alone. There must be added the taste, inspiration, and intuition of the critic, who, by entering into the artist's soul, can follow the same process of recomposing and transforming all the materials the latter had followed, and can consciously reconstruct the work exactly as it had been unconsciously created by its divinely inspired author. This, too, may certainly be called æsthetic, subjective, personal, and even unscientific criticism; but failing its employment, the work of art, being essentially of a personal nature, remains uncomprehended, and no faithful appreciation of it can possibly be obtained.

The genius of any artist is a mystery that is only to be interpreted by another mystery, that is, the genius of the critic. In order to comprehend the beautiful, one must feel it, admire it, and make others admire it. If in making a critical examination of any work of art we dare to neglect the personal, subjective element—that, nevertheless, is essential to art—because of the difficulty of subjecting it to strictly scientific analysis, we not only fail to explain the work in question, but end by losing all taste for and all comprehension of it—we only succeed in sterilising, as it were, its original germ. In fact, any one who examines what have been the consequences of the exaggeration of the new method in our literary schools will be convinced of this truth. Every year there is a chorus of complaint, because our boys still write so incorrectly, in spite of their prolonged study of Latin, Greek, and Italian classics. Then, physicians come forward to cure the malady. One prescribes a bigger dose of Dante, another, a little more Manzoni and Leopardi. Next, the Minister of Public Instruction prescribes increased study of Dante, Manzoni, and Leopardi, but the following year the pupils write worse than

before. So long as Homer, Virgil, and Dante are only shown to boys on the anatomical table, where we professors have already dissected them, robbed them of life, and destroyed the inner spirit that had throbbed for ages in their immortal works, we might as well teach the boys algebra or chemistry, and pretend to train their æsthetic taste by that method! We have exchanged purposes for appliances, converted method into the end of learning. Thus we see crowds of clever young men taking their degree, who, with much talent and considerable learning, devote themselves to labours of research, discover new historical documents, or bring to light the sources of some work of art without saying a word of its æsthetic value, and perhaps even considering this unworthy of their attention, as beneath the higher dignity of science. Meanwhile the style and diction of their writings bear too much resemblance to those of old documents and foreign authors, and far too little to our classics. This reminds me of a very earnest young student, who, after devoting two years to close study of an extremely bad poem in a seventeenth-century dialect, ended by discovering its sources in two very inferior French poems. He had pursued those researches with such untiring zeal, and displayed so much talent and learning, that it was necessary to give him his doctor's degree, with praise in addition. But to what end had all this labour and learning been applied? Would it not have been better to use them for some other purpose?

Yet how can we be surprised if the course pursued in school is also pursued out of school? By dint of studying history and historical criticism we have become excellent interpreters of the past, but we are rapidly losing all special and personal sense of art.

The creative spring is dried up. To give one example: Would it not be hard to find throughout the world's history any age so incapable as the present of founding a special architecture of its own? Undoubtedly we are first-rate restorers of ancient buildings, but all our efforts and all our schools only lead us to perpetual and exclusive reproduction in the style of older times; we never succeed in having a style of our own. Even in the so-called industrial art, for which we have formed many schools, such as were unknown to the ancients, we are merely able to imitate the past without acquiring any individual character or style of our own, such as every other age has possessed, even including the "Barocco" architecture of the eighteenth century. Nowadays it would seem as if savages only still had a style of their own, for we are sometimes obliged to borrow from them certain ornaments, colours, and woven stuffs which still preserve a spark of the native, spontaneous originality that appears to be rapidly dying out among ourselves. Even among savage races it seems to fade away whenever they are brought into close contact with our prosaic civilisation.

X

The more closely a question of this sort is studied, the greater seems its importance from every point of view. When in past days jurisconsult and moralist persisted in their quest for the abstract, absolute idea of justice and virtue, they were checked by endless obstacles and never succeeded in coming to an agreement. Their definitions were always being altered to fit into their respective systems of philosophy, and

during the conflict theories and champions perished alike. Next arose the question: What is the use of seeking for a perfect government which has never existed, and can never be found? What is the use of seeking for absolute justice or for an eternal, immutable code of morality when we only see ever-changing governments, manners, and laws? Does not every nation's moral sense keep pace with its civilisation? Do we not see one people calmly tolerating all that another severely condemns? Do we not know that some of the greatest men of old, regarded in their day as patterns of virtue, were notoriously guilty of crimes and of vices such as we may not even mention? Why, then, should we pretend to explain a world that is perpetually changing according to a theory of everlasting immutability? Thereupon the historical school proved to us that in every social body justice and, consequently, law are in a state of continual becoming, in very strict relation with the degree of civilisation of this or that people, so that they change as civilisation moves on; otherwise we could arrive at no explanation of the different and ever-changing modes of legislation to be met with on all sides. Hence it is necessary to turn to concrete facts and be content to examine in what way the conception of justice and virtue is manifested and developed in the gradually improving ideas, laws, and customs of different races. But after observing and studying all this process of development and establishing its relation to the times, then the spectacle of this whirling flood of change suddenly brings us back to the urgent question: What, then, is right, what is wrong? This problem can only be solved by submitting it to a test that history fails to supply. For history teaches us that Crusaders, Inquisitors,

Jacobins of the "Terror," St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic, St. Ignatius, heroes, martyrs, and murderers were all equally in relation with their own times, all products of their environment and of the degree of civilisation that bore such mixed fruit. But are all their deeds to be explained and justified on that score? What, then, is goodness, what is evil? It were useless to reply that science is only concerned with facts and laws. Even virtue and vice, good and evil are facts, and we need some definite standard of judgment in order to distinguish the one from the other. This is a problem of the utmost importance, not only for science, but likewise for our moral destiny and for our life itself.

Wherefore we are driven to the conclusion that since we are unable to judge any work of art without the aid of something higher than pure reason—that is, without the aid of the artistic sense—so, too, we are unable to judge the conduct of individuals or of peoples without the aid of something that is not science, but conscience itself. Even as the best way of training and developing the taste, lacking which no work of art could exist or be understood, is to make beauty felt, admired, and enjoyed, instead of teaching by precept; since it is better to read the works of great masters, and by reading them lead others to share our delight—so, likewise, in order to communicate the sense of goodness to others, we, too, must possess and be inspired by it, for the example of a single good deed is of greater use than any amount of theoretical eloquence. By living one learns how to live. In art, as in morality, to persist in exclusive adherence to the rules of historical criticism, to persist in substituting reason for feeling, theory for action, would end by destroying all sense of beauty

or goodness. Both the æsthetic and the moral problem remain unexplainable by pure reason without the addition of a sense of the beautiful, in the first instance, of a conscience impelling us to goodness in the second. By overmuch reasoning there is risk of losing reason itself. We shall never understand human nature unless we admit that it contains something different from mere reason or science—which has, nevertheless, a value of its own—something that is no less sacred than reason or science, and is, perhaps, even more valuable with regard to the realities of life.

XI

Ideas such as those we have described are now becoming more widely spread and have been interpreted by various writers in a more or less clear and definite way. Two authors only need be quoted at this point. The first is Frederick Nietzsche,[1] who wrote an analytical essay on the good and evil results of the present use of history as a means of education. Our practice of living in the past, he tells us, destroys all possibility of happiness, since, in order to be happy, one must learn, on the contrary, how to live solely in the present. Children are happy exactly because they know nothing of the past and only think of the passing moment. Meanwhile we have sunk to the level of animals, whose life consists in mere rumination. This is why we have lost all originality of character and all plastic force, inasmuch as the latter, by transforming everything into our own flesh and

[1] Nietzsche : "Von Nutze und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben." Fritsche, Leipzig—undated.

blood, can regain originality by forgetting the past. No great artist ever completed a genuine work of art, no general ever won a battle, no individual, no people ever attained to true greatness and freedom without some brief experience of the "unhistorical state of mind" (*Unhistorische Zustande*)—that is, without forgetting for an instant the history of past times in order to live solely in the present, only feeling and knowing that which had to be said or done *at the moment.* Both the *historical* and the *unhistorical condition*, adds the author, are equally indispensable to man. But at no previous time has the past ever pressed so heavily on the present or stifled it so thoroughly as now. We are walking encyclopædias of historical knowledge. For the modern man criticism is the all-in-all, wherefore his personality is very feeble. Our science no longer follows nature, but destroys it instead. We have forgotten that Science should be chiefly the handmaid of life and that history itself should be beneficial, not hurtful, to life.

The true name of the new malady from which we all suffer is undoubtedly *historitis.* Owing to our exaggerated respect for the past we no longer dare, and no longer know how, to convert it into nutritive food. It is a necessity for man not only to experience the *historic* condition that leads us back to the past, and the *unhistorical* that makes us live in the present, but also the *superhistoric* condition, that extends our outlook from the finite to the infinite, from the ever-changing state of *becoming* to that which gives *being* the stamp of eternity, namely, to art and to faith. Our actual state verily resembles that which preceded the intellectual grandeur of the Greeks. They, too, were then plunged in a true chaos of jumbled remnants of different civilisations—the Oriental, Occidental,

Semitic, Aryan, Babylonian, and Egyptian—all of which remnants co-existed in the Hellenic spirit, so that the religion of the Greeks seemed a true battle of the gods, *ein Götterkampf*. But they learnt how to organise their chaos (*das Chaos zu organisiren*), and this is what we must learn to do if we wish to escape from our present condition.

The other work that claims our careful attention at this point is by that eminent philosopher, the late Professor Sidgwick.[1] In this essay the author shows special acumen in dealing with the historic method, which he criticises severely. In our opinion, however, he is unjust in attributing to the method itself all the faults of those who make an abuse of it. He begins by remarking that the antithesis between the "historical" and the "philosophical" view is not only ancient but antiquated; . . . that never before has there prevailed so wide a belief in the historical method and its claim to have a universal application. It is assumed by its admirers to have invaded and transformed all departments of thought, "and that anything which eludes it must be unknowable. Were this the case, there would be no room left for the 'philosophical' method. The 'historical' is powerless to invade the solidly established sciences of physics and pure mathematics, inasmuch as it resembles a malady that can only attack the feeblest organisms. It profits by the disagreement of metaphysicians and deems itself able to solve philosophical problems by dint of raking up ideas conceived of them in past times, which, although certainly easier to discover, afford no solution. Accordingly, all problems relating to the existence of God, the immor-

[1] "The Historical Method," by Professor H. Sidgwick, published in *Mind* (a philosophical review); *vide* the number for April, 1886.

tality of the soul, and so on, are still left involved in their old tangle of difficulties."

At this point, however, one must pause to draw distinctions. If we use the term "history" in its true signification, that is, as the history of society and mankind, it will be clearly seen that the "historical" method can only be applied to the moral sciences, and neither to natural phenomena nor to mathematical truths, since these are in no wise historical. It would be much the same as trying to train the eye to distinguish sounds. Who has ever attempted to prove the laws of optics or of universal gravitation by means of the "historical" method? What this really claimed to do was, instead, to hold the same position in relation to the moral sciences that the experimental method already occupied with regard to the natural sciences. Only studying phenomena and investigating their laws, the experimental method renounced all search for absolute truth, or for the inner spirit of things, and thus separated physics for ever from systematic philosophy. Certainly, the nature of force and of light, &c., being still unexplained, metaphysical science may always tackle those questions. But what the latter science may no longer attempt to do is to try as before to deduce the laws of force and light from more or less arbitrary and hypothetical definitions.

The historic method assumes to work somewhat on the lines of the experimental method, by forsaking all scientific research as to the nature of God, of the soul, of thought, of the good or the beautiful; it examines, instead, all the different manifestations of thought, of the religious, moral, and æsthetic sentiment to be found in history, and ascertains their ruling laws. The problems disregarded by the "historical" may always be left to the metaphysical method, which is

free to attack them as it chooses and solve them if it can. But even though some rash students may wish to apply the historical method to subjects which are naturally beyond its reach, this is no sufficient reason for denying the real value of the method or for refusing to recognise the services it has already rendered to science. This would be the same as to condemn mechanics and optics for their inability to explain the intrinsic nature of force and light. Even as the experimental method, so likewise the historical does not take the place of metaphysical science; it has appropriated, however, not only a considerable number of social and moral problems this had hoped to solve, but has even seized upon whole branches of learning that it wished to retain as vital parts of its organism, and which, on the contrary, only made rapid advance after being detached from that organism.

Philosophy should be the last to complain of this, seeing that the discovery of these new methods was mainly due to that science. Did not Bacon recommend the experimental method? Did not Galileo declare that his chief help in discovering it was derived from his studies in philosophy? To the same cause and in a far greater degree is likewise due the discovery of the historical method. Nevertheless, the philosophers were the fiercest opponents of the experimental method, even as they are now the worst foes of the historical method. It really appears as though they cannot be reconciled to the fact that, as a result of their most successful labours, another considerable province of their ancient realm is now slipping from their grasp. For all the present discord and conflict is born of the fact that the philosophers claim the exclusive right of continuing to deal in their own way with the very problems which only by the use of the

historic method have been put on the right road towards the discovery of an efficient solution. Professor Sidgwick, however, goes on to say: "Let us now see the nature of the progress that the historical method is presumed to have made in the study of society and the human mind. Undoubtedly it has largely contributed to 'the increased recognition of the fundamental importance of the "social factor" in the development of the mind of the individual.' But this had been already recognised by J. S. Mill, from whose work, a generation ago, we all learnt our 'Logic of the Moral Sciences.'"

This is quite true. But how did Mill arrive at the solution of a problem from which so many others depend? Precisely by his adherence to the historical method, and, as he tells us himself, by expounding the ideas of Auguste Comte, whose philosophy is entirely based on that method. If by this means, as even Sidgwick has confessed, we are enabled to explain the historic formation—although not the inner essence—of the mind, this is certainly no inconsiderable result, and the metaphysicians, who had never achieved as much by their own system, have now no right to feel injured because the desired goal has been reached by a different road from theirs. Professor Sidgwick, however, goes too far when he says that the "historical method" not only serves to explain how ideas and opinions have been formed, but asserts its right to judge them by "determining how far they are true or false"; and in this lies the fault of the method. For how can an inquiry into the history of our beliefs affect our view of their truth or falsehood? . . . All this makes for the greater increase of scepticism at this day, the which is partly the cause and partly the effect of the historical method, a method that would not be received

with so much enthusiasm were it not also expected to lead us to the discovery of such truths. But the study of former beliefs can merely help to confirm the conclusions at which we had already arrived by another and, necessarily, different road. In ethics as in politics, philosophy seeks for certain absolute truths, which depend on the ultimate aim of society and mankind. Ultimate aims of this kind are neither laws nor phenomena; to treat them as such would be the same as to ask whether they were square or round. Therefore, they entirely elude the historical method. In fact, were we even to succeed in positively ascertaining what rules of conduct will be observed by the men of the next generation and what institutions will then be established, this would not suffice to teach us whether such rules and institutions be righteous or unrighteous, whether helpful or obstructive to real social progress. No serious thinker will deny the utility of historical studies to the science of politics. Yet this science can never be based upon history, which, although it may tell us all that has happened, could never—even if able to tell us what will happen in the future—be able to tell us that which *hic et nunc* ought to be done. Therefore political science finds no sure foundation in history, and has to seek it elsewhere, *i.e.*, in knowledge of the appointed end of society, regarding which history can tell us nothing, being solely able to furnish confirmatory proofs when we shall have discovered it by other means. And the illustrious writer winds up by saying that assuredly "we shall learn far better the real lessons history has to give, if we avoid asking from it instruction which is beyond its power."

XII

As the reader sees, we are now at the opposite pole from that of Seeley and Freeman. For, as we have noted, the two latter really wish to confuse history with politics; while Sidgwick, on the contrary, denies that politics should or could be based on history. But it seems to me that this is where the weak point in his reasoning is most clearly betrayed. It is an undoubted fact that the historical method is unable to teach us what is the ultimate end either of mankind or of society. But Professor Sidgwick argues the point as though there were one science, that of metaphysics, which would be able to solve those problems, and as though the historical method, which is unable to do so, had dared to usurp its place, and thus given rise to the great confusion that he justly deplores. But, as a matter of fact, the historical method turns away from those problems, regarding them as insoluble for itself, at least, while metaphysical science, on the contrary, claims the power of solving them, although, as Sidgwick himself is forced to acknowledge, it has, so far, missed success. Indeed, it is to the weakness or incompetence of metaphysics that he attributes the temporary and deplorable intrusion of the historical method within the boundaries of the metaphysical camp. When he adds that the above method can supply no certain knowledge of ultimate ends, but can only furnish corroborative proofs of such knowledge when it shall have been discovered in another way, we venture to think that he makes a far greater concession than he knows. For even the experimental method is powerless to discover the laws of

nature; it can only prove and confirm them after they have been discovered by some flash of genius.

The real trouble is that absolute truths, being neither laws nor phenomena, elude the experimental as well as the historical method, and are considered to be privileged objects of metaphysical research, though, so far, still beyond its reach. Accordingly, when we reach the conclusion drawn by Professor Sidgwick, namely, that as politics should supply rules of conduct, they cannot derive them from history, but must frame them in accordance with the ultimate end of society and of man, the which end can only be learnt from metaphysical science, what will be the result of all this? Seeing that the ultimate end in question has never been scientifically discovered and proved, political science will thus remain tied to philosophical systems, and must change as they change, without ever being able to have any practical effect on the realities of life. Now this is precisely the danger that the historical method has sought to avoid, and, to a considerable extent, has succeeded in avoiding. In fact, on what can political science be based, if not upon a study of the social body, which it would fain teach us how best to rule and govern? For, if not from history, from what other source could such knowledge be derived? It is from history that we learn about different forms of society, different forms of government, and different institutions, together with the effects produced by them at different periods. History likewise shows us the course taken by human society down to the present day, and that which it is now pursuing.

But all these matters are mere facts, as Sidgwick justly remarks, and no rule of conduct can be drawn from facts. How is the politician to ascertain in what

direction he should urge society forward, in order to guide it to an ultimate end of which he knows nothing, and vainly seeks to gain some idea from the pages of history?

This, most undoubtedly, is the hardest knot of the problem. For it contains an element that equally eludes the grasp of the historical and the experimental methods and prevents the social and moral sciences from attaining the certainty and precision secured by mathematical and natural science. But, for my own part, I believe that it will always remain an insoluble problem, unless the work of science and reason is supported by that of conscience, which is also a revealer of truth. Just as artistic phenomena can be neither explained nor conceived by reason alone, when the sense of beauty is lacking, so, too, all moral and social phenomena are equally incomprehensible without that sense of goodness and duty which is inborn within us, grows with our growth, and works upon us by force of its own intrinsic virtue, not by mere force of reason. Moralists are still disputing—and more hotly than ever at the present day—on the nature of goodness, a question as to which all honest men, and often the dishonest as well, are fully agreed. Of course, our knowledge of the nature of goodness cannot be called scientific; nevertheless it is the most certain, or at all events the best knowledge of the subject to which we can attain, until science shall have discovered some other solution of the problem. So, too, for the moment, if we try to establish the principle of politics by deducing it from some philosophic conception of the ultimate end of society and of man, or from the absolute idea of truth, we shall only obtain a systematic and abstract science, to which will be opposed, as in the past, a blind em-

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piricism that has no faith in a science which is powerless to exert any practical effect. If, instead, we leave metaphysics to make research for primary truths and for the ultimate end of man, and until these shall have been discovered and attested with scientific exactitude will be content to put feeling and conscience in their place and recognise the value of these, then, at all events, by dint of studying society and discovering its laws, we shall be enabled to push political science more quickly towards the goal that all of us feel it is destined to reach. For is it not a sufficiently well proved fact that, so long as politics pursued the philosophic method, they never succeeded in becoming a science, and consisted of mere abstractions on the one hand and mere empiricism on the other? Has it not been well proved that, beginning with Aristotle and Machiavelli, politics only became a science by adopting the positive and historical method? It is true that, even by this method, we have not yet been able to discover the essential nature of goodness nor the ultimate ends of society and of man; but we have finally obtained a science, the only science as yet within our grasp, that teaches us to understand society and likewise forwards its progress. It seems to us that Professor Sidgwick's eagerness to point out the social problems which cannot be solved by the historic method has made him forget that so far no other method has given us any definite solution of them, and has also made him too neglectful of those other problems which have been successfully solved by the historic method. Has not a new aspect, a new character, been given to the science of politics and to all the social sciences by the use of this method? And supposing these sciences should forsake the historical

method and return to the metaphysical fold, would they not once more become as systematic, changeable, and uncertain as of old? The difficulty set forth by Professor Sidgwick undoubtedly exists, and it is a very serious difficulty, but that is not the fault of the historical method. It is the old question that is always being revived; for mankind cannot be resigned to ignorance of its moral destiny, and rebels against the impotence of reason to solve the problem. This is shown not only by Professor Sidgwick's meritorious essay, but also by other works which similarly suggest the new line of inquiry that science now seems disposed to pursue.

XIII

Now that we have examined the various attempts which have been made to explain the whole problem of moral and intellectual life by historical research, and noted their complete failure to pass certain limits and reach unconditioned absolute truth, the question again assumes an essentially philosophical aspect, and we are, therefore, again compelled to refer to Kant, who made admirable remarks on it in his "Critique of Pure Reason." So far, he said, metaphysics have been the arena for the disputes of philosophers who have continually demolished one another's works. This came about from their obstinate endeavours to attain to the Absolute, the Unconditioned, and from their refusal to admit that such knowledge is beyond the grasp of reason. Unless we recognise once for all that our knowledge is conditioned, that the Absolute transcends reason, our efforts to unduly enlarge the field of knowledge

only succeed in narrowing it too much. In fact, if we attribute an absolute value to the laws of reason, it will be impossible, without contradicting ourselves, to admit the possibility of anything that cannot be proved by reason. Hence materialism and unbelief will inevitably follow. If the law of causality is not only a law to my individual mind, but is also possessed of an absolute objective value, I must transport the mechanism that results from the fatal connection of natural phenomena into the moral world as well. For even the human soul, being subject to that law, in the sphere of such actions as are visible phenomena, cannot be conceived to be free. The substantial and unconditioned liberty that is natural to the human soul, that is necessary to our responsibility, and therefore to the very existence of the moral world, could not be admitted, could not even be imagined, without lapsing into contradiction. If, however, on the other hand, I merely grant a subjective value to the principle of causality as a law to my own reason, then I shall neither be able to demonstrate nor to know what free will is, though I may admit and recognise its existence. Hence it becomes necessary to fix the limits of reason, so that it may leave an opening for faith. In this way practical reason may reconstitute the moral world, which would run the risk of being destroyed by pure reason alone. Then metaphysical science, which embraces all knowledge, can refer to both without danger. Kant then goes on to say that the world will never be without metaphysics, only we must try to prevent it from working harm by its exaggerated pretensions. For, in fact, what help has been given by all the efforts of science towards proving the immortality of the

soul and the existence of God as an *Ens realissimus?* Decidedly, they had no real effect outside the school, and even within it often ended by provoking materialism and unbelief. Subtle scientific arguments in favour of such truths as might be useful and necessary to the human race never had any more real effect on the public than the equally subtle arguments against such truths. Among the masses, faith in God and the hope of a life to come always arose spontaneously, quite independently of the school, and often in spite of its teachings. For the school has no right to claim any superior insight into matters of general human interest. If these matters formed the exclusive privilege of reason and science they would be even as the scientific knowledge of natural laws, a privilege of the few. They ought, instead, to be the common property of the human race and accessible to all; hence it is most fortunate if, by eluding the grasp of pure reason, they can remain a revelation of feeling and conscience, the patrimony of practical reason. Accordingly, the school should be satisfied to work out scientifically and determine the value of such proofs as are generally comprehensible, and from the moral point of view entirely satisfactory; decidedly more so than if they were scientific proofs, since then, as we have said, they would be the privilege of the few, while they should be the common property of all. In conclusion he says: "Thus it is that criticism, while seeming to narrow the field of reason, leaves untouched that common patrimony of the human race of which metaphysics can always examine the value, and deals a mortal blow to the materialism and unbelief which do so much harm."

It is beyond doubt that modern philosophy began

with Immanuel Kant, since he was its first guide on an untrodden course. Therefore, even at this day, a critical study of his "Critique" would be the safest and perhaps the most necessary means of pursuing this course with success. By defining the rights of the human mind Kant demolished the sensuousness of the eighteenth century; by defining the limits of reason he showed us the way to combat materialism and unbelief. But when, unsatisfied with all this, he began to have doubts as to the objective value of any human knowledge, he lapsed into the scepticism he had sought to avoid. Even the just value he had attributed to faith and conscience in his "Practical Reason" could not save us outright from the wreck with which we were threatened in his "Pure Reason." Thus, in fact, an opening was given to the transcendental idealism of Fichte, who, in seeking to escape doubt, represented God and the universe as creations of the human brain. Yet, in order to recognise the limits of reason, to recognise that our knowledge can never attain to the Absolute and the Unconditioned, it is not requisite to deny that they have any objective value nor to doubt the possibility of ever discovering the truth.

The unconditioned essence of things is beyond our grasp, and all our knowledge is more or less relative, because it is all subject to the laws of our still restricted reason, and also to our senses, which are by no means infallible, and will never be able to give us unconditioned reality. Most certainly the external world seems different to our eyes to what it is in reality. Many stars whose positions we are now examining have disappeared from the heavens for centuries, and all are seen by us in positions which they have long abandoned. Some years ago an ingenious writer started a curious theory. Supposing, he said, that our

visual organs were to acquire much greater strength while otherwise remaining as they are, and supposing that we inhabited the most distant planets and could watch from thence everything that happened on the earth, we could then be eye-witnesses of such contemporary events as the battles of Salamis and Marathon. And supposing that we could travel to the earth from our planet at greater speed than light, then in a few days our eyes might watch the passage of ages of history. But even putting this aside as a fanciful theory, it is a positive fact that we are enveloped, as it were, in a fog, through which light, sound, ideas—everything, in short—comes to us refracted. Nevertheless, even if there be no possibility of clearing away the whole of this fog, we are certainly beginning to diminish its density. Indeed, the law of progress and the continual search for truth are the result of this process. For once we could arrive at absolute unconditioned truth, our nature would be instantaneously changed, and all our progress would come to an end. It was for this reason, Lessing said, that a continual search and perpetual conquest of truth was preferable to the actual possession of it. But it is impossible to come to any conclusion on a subject regarding which we have no decided information. The laws of nature become truly known to us as soon as, by means of our knowledge, we can turn them to our own ends and are able to reproduce their phenomena. For even though our knowledge be somewhat uncertain and apt to lead us astray, science may frequently find some means of rectifying or neutralising our blunders. Even the mere guesswork of science may lead us to the truth. The supposed element ether, although its existence remained unproved, served as a basis for the optical

science that has given us the telescope and microscope. All parts of the universe are fused into one organic harmony; hence, seeing that our knowledge is always progressive, however limited it may be, it is impossible to imagine that solely our relation to the external world should be doomed to remain a continual illusion.

However, the mighty thinker of Königsberg was decidedly in the right when he declared that even as reason unaided by the senses and the senses unaided by reason are incapable of forming experience or of affording us any knowledge of the external world, so, too, reason alone without feeling, imagination, or conscience would be powerless to afford us any knowledge of the spiritual, much less of the moral, world. Both life and art would remain inexplicable mysteries, involving us in a hopeless tangle of doubt. All this serves to show that the desire to pass the boundary line of reason is not, as pretended by some, a fault for which the historical method is solely responsible, but is rather an inherited fault, that was unconsciously borrowed from the metaphysicians by certain incautious followers of the above-mentioned method.

The more closely we examine the problem the more clearly we see the necessity of giving feeling and imagination their due place and value in the intellectual and moral life. Reason itself continually requires the aid of imagination. What science in fact could exist, much less progress, without that aid? Were not the greatest discoveries made by reason and imagination conjoined? How far would the experimental method reach, without the intuition of genius? It has been remarked—and by no means unwisely—that the science of geology required almost as much imaginative power as the creation of Homer's epics. The same might be said with regard to other

sciences. Even in real life, what society, family, or system could exist without feeling or without faith in the fullest meaning of the word? Wherefore it is highly important that all reciprocal rights and boundaries should be strictly respected. If the place of reason be usurped either by imagination, sentiment, or faith, the only results obtained are superstition, disorder, and incoherence. If reason, on the other hand, usurps the place of imagination, &c., instead of studying those qualities and ascertaining their due value and extent, it will only breed disorder, without being able to reconstruct anything; it will consequently enfeeble itself by mutilating the human mind.

When we are rapt in admiration of a sunset or sunrise effect, of some grand sea view, some Alpine landscape or Gothic cathedral, if any one were to inquire at that moment the cause of our admiration, and we should attempt to explain by force of reason the feeling excited in us by the scene, how far could we succeed in so doing? Certainly we should fail to solve the problem; possibly we should merely destroy the admiration that had possessed us, and cease to comprehend the very beauty we were struggling to describe. Imagination had led us farther than reason can reach, and the latter takes us back to a point untouched by imagination. Where the latter reigns we must use feeling. Again, who shall ever explain why music should have so overpowering an effect on our mind? If the artist whose fingers are flashing over the keys with lightning speed should ask himself, at the moment when he is most moved and has communicated his emotion to us, to give a reason for what he is doing, a reason for the enthusiasm he feels and inspires in his hearers, what would be the result? Every one may guess it. The artist would be unable

to play another note. Yet we often find ourselves saying that there must be some law, some reason in those harmonies, and we vainly try to discover what it is. In fact, when, by drawing a violin bow across a thin sheet of metal sprinkled with sand, you produce a note from it, the sand assumes different curves according to the pitch of sound produced. Those curves can be defined by algebraical signs, and therefore one ought to be able to render a symphony into algebra, make it, as it were, the solution of a mathematical problem. By giving *x*—*i.e.*, the impression one wishes to produce—one should be able to find the formula that, being translated, would give us the symphony itself. Why, then, is all this sheer nonsense? For many reasons, and, first of all, because mental emotions cannot be represented by signs, and no creations of art can be achieved by mathematical calculations.

Leibnitz declared music to be an unconscious calculation of the mind: *exercitium arithmeticæ occultum nescientes se numerare animi.* But, according to Schopenhauer, it was, instead, *exercitium metaphisices occultum nescientes se philosophari animi.* The dictum common to both writers is *exercitium occultum nescientis animi—a hidden act of the unconscious spirit.* Can such an act ever be the work of conscious reason? Yet music pierces to the innermost depths of our soul, speaks to us, stirs us, and carries us away. Its language is ideal, spiritual, and divine; but as it is not the language of reason, reason cannot explain, cannot even comprehend it. In the same way and from much the same cause pure reason can never take the place of faith, being powerless alike to produce or totally suppress the phenomena of faith. The first time

that I explained my views on the fundamental idea, merit, and utility of the historical method and of Positivism, my friend Professor B. Spaventa, who had a special gift of philosophical acumen, said to me, in criticising my essay, "What do you mean by asserting that certain mysteries are not to be explained by reason? Do you not see that this would leave a vacuum in the soul, which, if it cannot be filled by reason, will be filled instead by faith?" This was true, yet this is exactly what happens in human life and society. It is useless to deny this, I think. Better to recognise the fact and study its value. This must be done by philosophy. What consequences ensue when we put our trust in reason alone has been admirably set forth by one who undoubtedly ranked among the greatest geniuses of our age, *i.e.*, by Darwin, both in his autobiography and his letters.

In 1881, a year before his death (he was born in 1809), he wrote as follows: "To the age of thirty or beyond it, poetry gave me intense pleasure, and so, too, pictures and music. . . . Now, however, I cannot read a line of verse. I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and find it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. I have also almost lost my taste for pictures and music. Music generally sets me thinking too energetically on what I have been at work on, instead of giving me pleasure. I retain some taste for fine scenery, but it does not cause me the same exquisite delight which it formerly did. On the other hand, novels which are works of the imagination, though not of a very high order, have been for years a wonderful relief and pleasure to me, and I often bless all novelists. A surprising number have been read aloud to me. . . . This

curious and lamentable loss of the higher æsthetic tastes is all the odder, as books on history, biographies and travels (independently of any scientific facts they may contain), and essays on all sorts of subjects, interest me as much as ever they did. My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts, but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone, on which *the higher tastes* depend, I cannot conceive. A man with a mind more highly organised or better constituted than mine would not, I suppose, have thus suffered; and if I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have been kept active through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature." [1]

At the same time and in the same way Darwin tells us how he gradually lost his religious faith, which had been once very lively. But he lost it by very slow degrees. "Formerly, while I still believed in God and the immortality of the soul, I wrote in my journal 'that whilst standing in the midst of the grandeur of a Brazilian forest it is not possible to give an adequate idea of the higher feelings of wonder, admiration, and devotion which fill and elevate the mind.' I well remember my conviction that there is more in man than the mere breath of his body. But now the grandest scenes

[1] "Life and Letters of Charles Darwin," vol. i. pp. 100–101. London: Murray, 1887.

would not cause any such convictions and feelings to rise in my mind. It may be truly said that I am like a man who has become colour-blind. . . . Certainly there is 'the extreme difficulty, or rather impossibility, of conceiving this immense and wonderful universe, including man, with his capacity of looking far backwards and far into futurity, as the result of blind chance or necessity.' When thus reflecting I feel compelled to look to a First Cause having an intelligent mind in some degree analogous to that of man; and I deserve to be called a Theist. This conviction was strong in my mind about the time, as far as I can remember, when I wrote the 'Origin of Species'; and it is since that time that it has very gradually, with many fluctuations, become weaker. But then arises the doubt, Can the mind of man, which has, as I fully believe, been developed from a mind as low as that possessed by the lowest animals, be trusted when it draws such grand conclusions? . . . Therefore, the mystery of the beginning of all things is insoluble by us; and I for one must be content to remain an Agnostic." [1]

This, in fact, remained his ultimate conclusion: that the theory of evolution could certainly be reconciled with the existence of God, and accordingly, despite his many fluctuations, Darwin could never have been an Atheist in the true sense of the word. But although he never reached the point of denying the existence of God, his belief in God grew gradually weaker until it disappeared altogether. Therefore, he says, "the safest conclusion to come to is that the subject is beyond the bounds of the human intellect, but *man can do his duty.*" [2]

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 304–313.
[2] Ibid.

Thus, the long and exclusive employment of the scientific method, that, as Darwin tells us, *had atrophied* in him all imagination and faith, still left the problem of life unsolved, so that his only safety lay in clinging to an unbroken *faith in duty.*

Assuredly, even did we succeed in proving the law of evolution with absolute mathematical certainty and down to its minutest particulars, removing every doubt, every obscurity, filling up every gap, thus leading man back step by step to the inferior animals down to the molecular, and, lower, still, to the primitive cell, to what should we have attained? All mankind would be potentially contained in the germ within that cell; all the genius of poets, philosophers, and artists, of statesmen, heroes, and martyrs. But who placed everything in that primal cell? Science cannot tell us this. Yet is not this the greatest mystery of all, from which all other mysteries proceed? For even those who pretend to have explained everything by the laws of force and of matter, what have they explained after all, while they are still ignorant of the nature of force, of the nature of matter? This was why Darwin, who had discovered and firmly believed in the law of evolution, was obliged to say in conclusion that the mystery of the beginning of all things is beyond the scope of reason. Accordingly, his final words were, "I am an Agnostic, not an Atheist, and I *believe* in Duty."

XIV

Not long ago, in writing on philosophy, a modern writer said: "The stamp of philosophy is that it does not aim to be a part or branch of knowledge,

but insists on being the vital principle and soul of it. For it not only seeks to make science intelligible, but would also interpret life, and therefore takes account of the question, 'What ought I to do?' But mere knowledge of the external world is insufficient for this purpose, seeing that it is powerless to explain the inner world of the spirit.

"Even the law of causality can do no more than connect certain facts with other facts which preceded them, without knowing either where to begin or where to stop. There is always some gulf that reason cannot fill. No primary cause, no final explanation, is even conceivable unless experience of external phenomena be joined with a deeper experience of the inner conscience. But the nature of the problem is such that, for its solution, not only the highest speculative faculties are required, but also the highest powers of the conscience and will.

"Certainly man is partly animal. But if he have a share in the universal reason, in the power of thinking, and if he be the author of responsible acts, he has also a share in the divine, the supernatural, and the eternal, without which nature itself would be inexplicable. This is the reason why a faulty mental training leads to a false conception of the world and of life, to a false system of philosophy, which can merely climb from one phenomenon to another and then be brought to a standstill on the brink of the gulf. Unless we recognise this fact, our science is powerless before the reality of life, in which it can see nought save impenetrable mystery. Therefore, nowadays the philosophy having the best chance of success is that which will be most content to keep within its own limits in order to gain stability and

sureness, and thus leave room for the faith that is necessary to life." [1]

A few months earlier another writer had expounded very similar ideas, and with even greater minuteness, which shows that the question is now in the air we breathe.

According to Mr. Ward, philosophy seeks to ascertain if the universe be ruled by any law, and if man shares in the supernatural through the exercise of will and reason. This question cannot be solved by reason alone, and that is why everyone has a philosophy of his own which not only depends on his intellect, but also on his moral character. "Tell me who you are," exclaimed Fichte, "and I shall tell you what is your philosophy." The man whose training has been exclusively dedicated to natural science looks at nothing but the connection of facts, without being able to go farther or to comprehend the life of thought in general, just as the abstract philosopher is unable to appreciate the value of facts. What renders philosophy so very difficult and complicated is the inclusion within its sphere of the problem of practical morality, inasmuch as the whole mass of our knowledge is insufficient to solve it. Of course, we cannot expect philosophy to be omniscient, nor to give us more than reason can give; but still we naturally expect that it should be able in some way to satisfy the needs of our moral and religious nature. Even limited knowledge may suffice for this purpose, provided it be in harmony with the realities of life. Now, in life deeds have the best of it, not words, as in the realm of science. All creatures learn how to live

[1] James Ward, "The Progress of Philosophy," *vide* No. 58 of *Mind* (1890), p. 213 and fol.

by living. Birds were not reptiles who first grew wings and then learnt how to fly; but by dint of trying to fly they developed wings. The function creates the organ required for it. Hence we must have a bold, adventurous, trustful spirit; it is necessary to life and contributes to its essence. Since we cannot explain everything, we require a philosophy able to justify and make possible the faith that is indispensable to life, and this in the only way in which it can be done, namely, as Kant justly said, by compelling reason to allow faith its due place. Then, the practice of life can be raised to a higher mental and moral sphere, and the wider intellectual horizon opened out from this loftier point of view will give us a loftier conception of the world. Philosophy will never entirely lose its personal character. Therefore, especially at the present time, the problem mainly consists in trying to ascertain whether our science leaves room for the faith which is required to promote the moral progress of man. We are on the eve of a great battle. As always in the struggle for life, victory will fall to the fittest, that is, to the system that shall have done most to promote our moral improvement.[1]

The fact of philosophy being bound to embrace the whole of man's intellectual and moral existence, that which is the work of reason and that which is the work of imagination, feeling, and faith—that which can be explained by reason and that which cannot be so explained—is precisely what increases the difficulties of the science, and renders it so unfitted to discover any certain and uniform method for the solution of all the toughest problems of life. Instead of diminishing,

[1] A. Campbell Fraser, "Philosophical Development," *vide Mind*, No. 57, p. 1 and fol.

these difficulties become greater every day. In fact, proportionately with the progress of knowledge in general—a progress often due to philosophy itself—some new branch of knowledge, after finding a method of its own, starts as an independent science, and forsakes metaphysics, just as the natural, historical, and social sciences had successively forsaken them. Even logic itself, having its own special method, has long formed a branch of philosophy that is entirely distinct from metaphysics. Thus the latter science sees its realm continually shrinking, and becomes all the more eager to attack single-handed the most disputed, difficult, and transcendental questions—those, in short, which can never be fully solved by pure reason alone. Accordingly, increased opposition is made to it by followers of the physical, natural, and mathematical sciences, who reject every idea of the absolute and the supernatural, since, being unable to prove the truth of that idea by any scientific process, they regard it as the baseless fancy of over-excited brains.

On the other hand, the general feeling of mankind continually refuses to accept this conclusion. Has it not been abundantly shown that, in spite of every adverse theory adopted by us, at all events the need of retaining our *belief* in the holiness of duty, of patriotism and humanity is perpetually renewed in the heart of man, not by force of reasoning, but because it is necessary to our life? For were all faith annihilated we should return to the state of savages, and presently arrive at the destruction of reason as well, since both are equally indispensable to our moral and intellectual being. In one of those solemn moments when we are faced by the mystery of life in its most tragic reality—when, beside the death-

bed of those we love best, our impotence seems only equalled by our grief and despair; when we are crushed by nature's inexorable indifference to our woes—what comfort can we derive from reason and science, what strength to help us bear our pain? None, absolutely none! Were we to listen to reason alone, in the presence of unavoidable death, or under the burden of helpless grief, we should sink back to a lower state of existence and be again as brute animals. But, seeing that, on the contrary, it is exactly at such times that every human heart is irresistibly stirred by an almost overwhelming hope that soothes our troubled soul, sanctifies our sorrow, strengthens our conscience, increases our piety, and, by enabling us to glean fresh courage from the very enormity of our pain, makes us feel ourselves true men, are we bound to demolish, at reason's behest, the most sacred law of nature? Has reason a right to destroy this inborn hope and faith, thus leaving a void in the heart of man that it is utterly impotent to fill? Does reason's vain pretence of explaining life give it a right to leave us to a despair that converts life itself into a perpetual contradiction and robs it of all moral value? Should it not rather acknowledge the fact of our hopeful faith to be a law of nature and study its value under that aspect?

Is there no scientific theory that could give a full explanation of virtue, could again revive belief in the sanctity of duty, if the feeling that gives birth to it were thoroughly worn out? Even granting that Bentham has proved all virtue to be no more than a due comprehension of one's personal interests, or that Mill has shown instead that virtue is born of the fusion and confusion of private and public interest, how far would all this take us? Thus we should have only robbed

virtue of its distinctive nature, and deprived it of the halo of sanctity that makes us regard it with veneration. If everything is reduced to calculations of personal interest, well or ill understood, who but a fool could calmly accept personal annihilation in order to promote the triumph of abstract goodness on earth, apart from any other consideration? Yet is not this exactly what we hold to be most worthy of admiration? Is not this uncalculating and unscientific admiration of ours the holiest feeling we possess, the most assured proof of our participation in all that is eternal and divine in the world? How can all this be disregarded by anyone who studies life in order to grasp and explain it in full, the better to improve it?

Undoubtedly the feelings described are existent in every one worthy to be called a man, no matter what theories he may hold. Brought down to us by tradition, infused by education, they are continually re-born in us by the irresistible force of our human nature. Science alone is insufficient to create them and impotent to destroy them. Therefore, science should acknowledge their existence, analyse their value, and distinguish their limits from those of reason. This is the only way in which science can help us to escape from the present state of confusion, in which we no longer know what we really believe or do not believe. At this day, what is most needed by science, and what philosophy first of all would best help it to attain, is the strict definition of all the exact rights and limits, not only of the various activities of the human mind, but likewise of different scientific methods and different courses of study. The natural sciences must renounce their pretended right of applying their own method to the investigation of mental

acts. A method well suited to things which can be weighed and measured can never be adapted to what cannot be weighed and measured. Philosophy, however, having already recognised the value of the experimental method and the independence that the natural sciences have gained by its use, is equally bound to acknowledge the value of the historical method, and the enormous progress in the moral sciences that has been solely achieved by employing it for the strict investigation of social phenomena, and for giving a definite form and scientific character to studies which, having had none before, are now firmly established for the first time. But, in its turn, the historical method must desist from its futile attempts to go beyond social and moral *facts*, or beyond the laws by which these are ruled. History can never be converted into a philosophical system nor into a natural or mathematical science. Nor would it even be possible to attain that purpose by forcing it to use methods appertaining to other studies. As Ranke has said, the function of history will always be to relate events just as they occurred, defining their value and their meaning. Even the science or philosophy of history cannot push its researches beyond the correlation of facts, their ruling laws, their real significance, and the general plan of which they form part. To go further than this would transport us from the sphere of history into that of philosophy.

Philosophy is the science that comprises in a special way all knowledge, all life, thought and deed, reason, imagination and faith, the natural and the supernatural world. It can never lose its distinctive character; it must not only enlighten the human mind, but must also improve the whole nature of man, since it likewise includes all the moral and practical problems

of life. Let us once more repeat that in real life action has always the advantage. While beauty can be comprehended by dint of feeling it, admiring it, and causing others to admire it, while faith can be communicated by him who feels it, the nature and existence of goodness are better proved by example than precept. One generous act has a greater effect than any theory or any scientific system of goodness. Entrance into the spiritual realm may be gained by many paths besides that of reason. Philosophy seeks to discover and define all these various paths, but in order to do so must first examine and distinguish every separate path, instead of confusing them and confining them all to the single road of reason. What, in fact, was the good of the attempt made by those thinkers who, in order to shirk the trouble of gauging the significance and value of the religious phenomenon, supposed religion to be merely a practical, popular version of philosophic truths, for the use of women and children and the common herd, who were unable to comprehend abstract truth? Regarded in that light, religion would be only an incomplete and erroneous philosophical system, containing, in an adulterated form, some portion of the truths which philosophy alone could possess in full. Fichte thought he could prove that the Holy Spirit announced by Scripture was the spirit of the New Philosophy, which plainly inculcates the truth of the co-existence in Jesus Christ of Divine and human nature. He pretended to explain in this fashion all the dogmas of the most abstruse theology, together with all the mysteries of religion, which were to be mysteries no longer, but only philosophical truths in disguise. But this theory could only lead to deeper confusion and increase the impossibility of explaining the existence

of religion. One may believe or refuse to believe; one may regard religious faith as a vain illusion; but for all of us, and for the masses as well as for men of letters, faith and reason are entirely different things. Their very procedure is different, and the distance between them is most plainly recognised even when they are apparently drawing together. Religion begins where reason ends, and where reason can reach there is no room for religion. Until this confusion has ceased, it will be impossible to find any issue from our present state of uncertainty and perpetual oscillation. But why and in what way did we fall into this state? More deeply too, we Italians, than any other race.

This can be explained by the history of our past. In ancient times men were too spontaneous—I might almost say unconscious—to allow themselves to be seriously disturbed and tormented by the problems to which Christianity was to give such new and increased force. And since the advent of Christianity we have passed through two great historic periods, the first being that of the Middle Ages, while the second, which began with the Renaissance, has not yet come to an end. In the Middle Ages the lay world was subject to theocratic rule, reason to faith; science, after being so powerful and flourishing in ancient times, was now sternly suppressed. Nevertheless, in spite of many assertions to that effect, it is untrue that in mediæval days all was decadence and barbarism. Did they not see the birth of Gothic cathedrals, which are certainly among the noblest creations of architecture; did they not witness the establishment of municipal independence, the creation of Christian art and of Christian poetry, culminating in the works of Giotto and of Dante?

Certainly the Renaissance emancipated reason, laid the foundation of science, inaugurated freedom of conscience, and created the modern man. But it also corrupted the moral character of Italians, destroyed the independence established in the Middle Ages, and left the nation, that had been so gloriously rescued by the Lombard League, a prey to foreign invaders.

Who can tell what would have been the results, or how different a course modern history might have taken, had not the Reformation later on rekindled the spirit of faith in one part of Europe at least? Undoubtedly reason reigned triumphant during the Renaissance, but precisely at that period it began to believe itself omnipotent and to claim the exclusive power of interpreting the whole moral, intellectual, and material world. So the frequently repeated efforts made by reason to this effect finally ended in Condillac's statue, which is no human being, but merely an abstract formula. The philosophical reaction inaugurated by Kant, and the historical method that was its indirect result, served to lead us back to the realities of life, into the heat of the struggle between the manifold feelings and passions and aspirations of mankind. This method clearly proves to us that unless all those varied elements be taken into account, life remains an unfathomable mystery, and, as Taine has expressed it, that with only *la raison raisonnante* to assist us, we should have to recur to the eighteenth-century philosophy, that is now buried for ever. But, although the historical method has led us back to life, it has not succeeded in unravelling the mystery of life.

Hence the sigh of despair that emanates from our wearied spirit, and that is permeating every branch of literature as the precursory sign of a new epoch.

For, so far the moral and spiritual progress of man has not kept pace with the prodigious advance achieved in science, commerce, trade, and public affairs. Our triumphs, even at the best, never seem to fulfil their real purpose; *i.e.*, our moral improvement and greater originality of mind. In any street of Athens in the days of Pericles, or in any Florence street in Dante's time, assuredly one could have found examples of truer originality of mind and character than could be discovered to-day in many great cities of Europe or America, in spite of the multitude of modern schools and of the much lauded progress of our science, our trade, and our freedom. The times we live in are, undoubtedly, strangely like those in which Socrates was confronted by the Sophists. Without creating either a new system of philosophy or a new religion, that philosopher recognised the limits of reason, and was aware of his own ignorance. He chiefly used his new method as a means of urging his disciples to think and to examine their own natures, inspiring them with the fixed belief that he who is firmly and unselfishly devoted to truth, constantly faithful to duty and goodness, will never be forsaken by the gods either in life or after death. Thus, by elevating the moral character of man, he enlarged man's intellectual horizon and inaugurated the new culture. Also, when hailed by the Delphian oracle as the wisest of men, Socrates declared that this title merely meant that of all men he best knew his own ignorance. In fact, nothing serves better to elevate our mind and stimulate its intellectual and moral progress than the acknowledgment of our own weakness; while nothing has so debasing an effect upon it as pride and over-confidence in ourselves and our powers.

Taken in this sense, that verse of the Gospel, "The humble shall be exalted," is of profound significance even to philosophers.

Of course, neither science nor reason can create belief or initiate the reform of religion. Matters such as these lie outside their field and beyond their reach.

Nevertheless, our knowledge of the limits and restrictions of reason not only sharpens our desire and increases our hope of making progress in some different way, but leaves free scope for the vigorous exercise of all the other mental forces and faculties which are so advantageous to reason itself, which is continually in need of their help. If the organic unity of the spirit be no illusion, if moral and intellectual life be really transmissible from any one to any other of our faculties, we should recognise that for the fuller training of the youthful mind we should turn its attention to art at the present day, in order to reawaken its sense of the beautiful, instead of strangling that sense by wilfully exaggerating the exclusive sovereignty of science and reason. For the sense of the beautiful will prove to be one of the best instruments for renovating and uplifting the moral powers of man. And this should be our chief and highest aim. Even if unwilling to approach the religious question, we are bound to fulfil the duty of imparting to the rising generation the new ideals of life. Every age has special ideals of its own. Never before has the sacrifice of this or that class of society for the good of some other class seemed so imperatively needed as at present to restore the public concord, which is now so disturbed as to threaten new calamities and force us to recognise that, in the midst of our vaunted progress, the spectre

of barbarism is already reappearing in the distance ahead.

As for the social question, it can never be solved while we continue to regard it as a purely economic problem, and fail to take its moral side into account. What is needed now is that every class should be ready to sacrifice something for the benefit of the rest, prompted so to do by a lively sense of fraternity, piety, and love. In giving our life for an ideal, we learn to believe in that ideal. It is only during a phase of new and potent moral excitement that a new faith can be brought into the world. The moment for solving the problem has not yet arrived, but is already drawing near. Our task consists in striving to effect the moral amelioration that will afford the required soil for the growth of a new science and new faith. The purport of this essay is merely to call attention to the existence of a novel tendency that, in various forms and different directions, is already plainly apparent in the literature of the day. If any one people has more urgent need than the others of taking a new road, it is certainly the Italian people. For we Italians, who were privileged to initiate the Renaissance and impart its highest benefits to the rest of the world, are likewise the people that has inherited the lion's share of its blunders and crimes.

The Renaissance age witnessed the downfall of our free governments, the corruption of our manners, the degradation of our moral standard. It was then that Popes, princes, and humanists were the first examples of the decay that hurled us into the pit of despair, from which only the political *faith* that still lived in us had the power to achieve our salvation. Such faith, however, cannot suffice to con-

solidate the existence of a free and civilised people unless it be sustained by a nobler human ideal. Wherefore, the chief aim of our literature and science should be to revive this ideal in the heart of our nation.

THE YOUTH OF COUNT CAVOUR

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THE YOUTH OF COUNT CAVOUR

Down to a recent date, it was impossible to give an accurate account of the early years of our great Italian statesman, for, owing to the absence of necessary documents, the greater part of Cavour's youth was veiled in obscurity.

Now, however, the publication of the fifth volume of "The Letters of Count Cavour" (edited by Senator Chiala) supplies all the missing details of that period, for the zealous editor has unearthed all discoverable documents relating to his hero and added illuminating notes both to these and to the correspondence; also while carefully suppressing names and allusions which might provoke scandal or cause annoyance to survivors, has retained every particular that could serve to enlarge our knowledge of Cavour. Nor has he avoided mention of certain inconsistencies that, being inherent to human nature, actually help to throw a clearer light on the intricacies of a great mind.

Therefore, now that we see the course of Cavour's early life plainly mapped out, the gradual development of his ideas, the cares and labours which occupied his time and his steadfast devotion to the patriotic purpose that grew with his mental growth during the years preceding his entrance into public life, the gap in his biography is almost filled up. We now know

how he was educated, what special training he received. Above all, we now behold the exact moment and manner in which he first spoke of Italy, first showed enthusiasm for the freedom of his country.

What were the real feelings of the keen-witted diplomatist; of the skilled parliamentary athlete who, by procuring the overthrow of his former colleague D'Azeglio, drew upon himself a storm of reprobation from foes and friends alike; of the statesman who from being merely a minister of the small Piedmontese kingdom became a minister of the kingdom of Italy, and seemed, for a time, to direct the affairs of all Europe? What, too, was his moral value as an individual, what was his conduct in private life? Such are the main questions which Signor Chiala tries to answer in his fifth volume by means of the new documents he has found. Most assuredly they are points of no small importance in the history of our national resurrection.

When the Italians first rose to arms, they were neither superior, nor even equal, to many other nations, either in art, literature, science, or warfare. That which lent irresistible force to our revolution and enabled it to do miracles was the profound conviction we felt—and could therefore infuse into others—of having to fight not only for the liberty, unity, and political independence of our own land, but, above all, to regain the right of being honest, which our tyrants insisted on denying us! Accordingly, almost all our leading politicians were men of genuine moral worth, whose public merits were based on private virtues. Thus the Italian people could find no higher title for the King who was the embodied spirit of their revolution than that of *Il Re Galantuomo*, or Good King. For the same reason, also, an examina-

tion of the real moral character of our greatest statesman is an inquiry of genuine historical value. The persistency and thoroughness with which Chiala has carried on this inquiry (already begun in his earlier volumes on Cavour, and even in a preceding biography of General La Marmora) proves that our author has grasped the inner spirit of our revolution and is animated by the same spirit. Accordingly, this work is not only a contribution to the history, but likewise to the moral education of the Italian people. This is no small matter at the present day, when the light of Italy's former guiding star has somewhat paled, no little to the detriment of the nation at large.

The first document supplied by Chiala is the certificate of Camillo Cavour's birth (August 10, 1810); the second shows that he entered the Military Academy on the 26th of August, 1820. We are given the programme of his studies, the records of his progress, and the daily reports on his conduct. We also find a French essay he had written at the age of thirteen, describing a military promenade in the Cotian Alps. We soon discover that he was a quick-witted, clear-headed boy, frank, lively, impetuous, and extremely addicted to argument. Major Cappai, who was his schoolfellow, relates in one of his letters that even at that time Cavour often talked about Benjamin Franklin and Santorre di Santa Rosa, who fell in battle fighting for the liberty of Greece. And when advised to devote himself to mathematics, in order to become another Lagrange, he said in reply: "The world moves; nowadays, one must study political economy instead of mathematics. I hope to see my country under a constitutional government. Who knows if some day I might not be a cabinet minister?"

This was at the age of fourteen! But, precisely at that time, his father obtained his nomination as one of the royal pages in waiting, an appointment he heartily disliked; accordingly, in answering the numerous congratulations showered upon him, he remarked that "it was a great nuisance to have to wear that livery." In 1826 he left the Academy, ceased to be a page, and became a lieutenant of the engineers. He was then employed on various defence works, and during one of his Alpine marches through Savoy and the Val d'Aosta chanced to make the acquaintance of a very clever Englishman named Brockden, who was also an accomplished artist, and who speedily became one of his dearest friends and correspondents. Early in the year 1830 he was despatched to Genoa to superintend some new fortifications, and came into contact with the real world for the first time. In writing to Mr. Brockden, he now speaks of the "glorious July revolution," which had stirred him to a pitch of enthusiasm he was unable to conceal. At the same time he congratulated his friend on the defeat of the Tory Ministry. "Every Englishman who loves humanity as you love it must have blushed to see an audacious faction trampling on national rights and supporting the 'Holy Alliance'! But while the rest of Europe is moving, my poor Italy, alas! remains crushed beneath the weight of political and religious oppression. Tell your compatriots that we Italians are not unworthy of freedom, for, although certain members of our body be decayed, there are men among us who deserve to enjoy the fruits of progress." Such were the words addressed to a distant friend by a young lieutenant aged twenty.

The year 1831 ended badly for Cavour. All the

hopes raised in him by the July revolution had come to naught, and he was an object of suspicion to the Government. Domestic misfortunes likewise added to his troubles. An uncle and a great-uncle died in quick succession, the former after most terrible sufferings. For two entire days Cavour stood by this uncle's bedside. At the last hour, however, the attendant clergy forced him to leave the room, fearing lest earthly affections should distract the dying man from thoughts of heaven. This proceeding was bitterly resented by him. In fact, when writing to Count G. G. de Sellon on the 19th of December, 1831, he said: "Hélas, les prêtres ont voulu nous ôter nôtre dernière consolation, et nous empêcher de mourir dans les bras de ceux qui nous sont chers." And after describing the cruel grief felt by the family, he adds, that in following two relations to the grave in such rapid succession he had been impressed by the vanity of human ambitions, and confirmed in his resolve to renounce every dream of winning fame or glory. "Yet I cannot refrain from supporting liberal ideas with the same ardour, though no longer hoping, and scarcely wishing, to gain renown by so doing. I shall continue to support them from love of truth, from sympathy with mankind." He expressed himself to the same effect in writing to Signora Cecilia de Sellon, the 3rd of January, 1832. After relating his family troubles, the persecutions he endured, and the failure of his hopes, he concluded by saying: "Nevertheless, I shall always remain faithful to my ideas. For these ideas are bound up with my existence; I shall profess and endeavour to promote them as long as I breathe." Later on we find the same affectionate tenderness expressed in his letters on the death of his sister-in-law, who, after severe and

continued suffering, expired in the arms of her aged father, who, while torn with grief, spoke to her of God and the future life.

It cannot seem surprising if, under the weight of these bereavements, and holding the political views which he so freely expressed, Cavour should have refused to retain his position in the Piedmontese army of that period. In fact, he had already sent in his papers, and his resignation was accepted on the 12th of November, 1831. For, as we learn from a letter sent him by Baron Cassio, one of his fellow-officers, his strongest wish at that time was to become thoroughly Italian (*d'italianizzarsi*). His friend Cassio warmly favoured this idea, "as the best means of making himself worthy of *the holy cause we have at heart*," advising him, meanwhile, to study Italian history, the Italian language, and to reside in Tuscany for a time. But he also urged him not to neglect public affairs, inasmuch as some business training was needful; for should the regeneration of Italy be effected, he might be required to act as one of the architects of the new State, a duty that could not be entrusted to any of those who had merely overthrown the old system. This letter, dated the 20th of August, 1832, was first brought to light by Professor d'Ancona, and has been most opportunely inserted in Chiala's edition of Cavour's correspondence.

Regarding this particular period there is little else to be gleaned from the new documents collected in Vol. V. Cavour's passionate interest in political news and novel ideas now began to excite notice in diplomatic circles, and accordingly he was marked by the police as a very dangerous man ("*un homme très dangereux*"). On the 16th of April, 1832, he wrote to his English friend asking for books and documents

on the burning question of the Corn Laws, adding that "Italy is the country most interested in the success of the English Liberals, since she is the one in greatest need of England's disinterested support." And shortly after, when expressing his thanks for the books received, he asked his friend for particulars of the Reform Bill, and said he hoped the new elections "would strengthen the Liberal party, to the joy of all Italians oppressed by Austrian bayonets and Papal excommunications." "*Toute manifestation libre de la pensée, tout sentiment généreux, est etouffé, comme un sacrilège et un crime d'État.*" A youthful and even sometimes exaggerated heat is frequently to be observed in these early letters.

However, while Cavour was being stirred by such passionate fervour and impatience, by such strong antipathy for the Piedmontese Government of that day, an event occurred that helped to give a more definite shape to his political views. This event was an ultra-republican conspiracy hatched by under officers of the army. "Ce complot de cerveaux brûlés," as he described it in a letter dated the 13th of May, 1833, "could only have the result of bringing our Government into still closer relations with Austria and to the adoption of reactionary measures. This is precisely what the Government desires. The one great evil brought about by the July revolution and counterbalancing the immense benefit it caused, has been the formation of an absurd, ferocious, and frenzied party, that in pursuing an impossible dream damages our future by propelling society towards a lamentable state of chaos, from which only some absolute and brutal power, either despotic or feudal, could be able to save it." Also, in another letter of the same date, to A. de la Rive, of which only an

extract had previously appeared, he expresses his views with still greater force: "Striking changes have occurred among my friends in consequence of the July revolution. Some who had been satisfied with very little have gone over to the ultra party, and now demand a general upset (*un bouleversement complet*). The others have joined the reactionaries. A republic is scarcely enough for the first; while the second demand a Louis XIV. to rule a nineteenth-century people. After prolonged vacillation, and a hard struggle with myself, I have stopped like a pendulum in the *juste milieu*, notwithstanding the attacks made on me by both parties. Accordingly, I beg to tell you that henceforth I shall be a man of the *juste milieu*. I am in favour of the most rapid progress, and I yearn to see Italy freed at the earliest possible moment from her barbarian oppressors. I foresee that a violent crisis is unavoidable, and I should not wish to defer it; but I also desire that the banks should be strengthened before the flood is let loose, and I am persuaded that *extremist* attempts only serve to retard the crisis and render it more perilous." In fact, from that moment he steadily adhered to these views.

On the 31st of March, 1835, we find him writing from Paris to A. de la Rive: "I have made the personal acquaintance of some of these *extremists*, and both my contempt for their intelligence and my horror of their frightful schemes have been prodigiously increased."

But the most notable fact to be remarked is the proof these letters supply that Cavour's decision to remain in the *juste milieu* was not the result of political passion nor political ambition—nor even of purely Italian feeling, or aristocratic devotion

to the Crown. Sometimes, indeed, he speaks very harshly of the Piedmontese rulers in general, and uses such extremely severe language with reference to Carlo Alberto, that even his biographer, Signor Chiala, accuses him of arrant injustice. But Cavour's words were prompted by a different motive. He understood Italy's position in Europe; he foresaw that a great and far-stretching political and social revolution must unavoidably occur; consequently, his piercing eagle glance had already grasped the social problem exactly as it is grasped at this day by the most eminent scientists and statesmen.

In a letter to De la Rive of the 13th of March, 1835, he says: "We are all rushing fast towards democracy. Is it for good? Is it for evil? Anyhow, it is an inevitable fact, and we are bound to promote it, since it accords with the laws of progress. Could you imagine any possible and practical plan for the reconstruction of any species of aristocratic government? Accordingly, all we can do is to embank the advancing flood of democracy, while opening a free channel for it. How could the uneducated masses, who will assuredly come into power, be possessed of the traditions and experience required for the direction of a new state of society that has had no previous existence in Europe?" Therefore, even at the date of his letter (1835) he had already foreseen the grave social questions that would infallibly arise[1]—foreseen with alarm the formation of anarchist groups, who, in trying to overthrow society, would cause innumerable disasters, and only succeed in hindering the march of progress. Hence Cavour's hatred of extremist parties, hence

[1] Senator Chiala makes some pertinent remarks to the same effect at page cvi of the Preface to his work.

his theory of the *juste milieu*, together with the obvious need of founding a progressive Moderate party in Italy; so he decided to do this, although opposed by the Right as well as the Left at a moment when, his friends having split up to drift towards radicalism or reaction, he stood quite alone. Do not the statesmen and political scientists of the present day find that the knottiest problem with which they have to deal is that of founding a democracy while avoiding its usual dangerous excesses? This was clearly understood by Cavour even in the year 1835. And it was this that drew his attention to England, as the most progressive and yet the most conservative of nations. Accordingly he declared himself in favour of the electoral reform that was to extend the political basis of that country; he was also in favour of the abolition of the English Corn Laws that was to be the first step towards Free Trade, and the articles he wrote on those questions were not only just and profoundly sagacious, but sometimes seemed truly prophetic. His studies on English affairs also touched on another grave point: the reform of the Poor Laws. Being convinced that social laws are among the most indispensable requisites for the establishment of true democracy, he recognised the advisability of such reform.

Cavour's essay on the Poor Laws, published in 1835 is a true masterpiece. Balbo introduced it to the public in enthusiastic terms, announcing that Italy now possessed a new and remarkable *writer*, whose sole defect was that of expressing his ideas in French. But Balbo's words, although inspired by highly generous and patriotic feelings, also proved that his political capacity was greatly inferior to Cavour's. For he went on to say that charity is ordained by the Gospel,

that is, by our conscience; and proceeded to inveigh against the Romans for trying to limit charity by municipal regulations, and likewise against Queen Elizabeth for having established in England the unfortunate principle of the poor being not only entitled to private charity, but to public charity as well. Cavour took a very different tone. "In England," he said, "the Poor Laws are based on a principle of public right that is peculiar to that country, which takes pride in seeing that principle not only in black and white, but also in practice to the fullest extent. The principle is this: that every English subject, no matter what may have caused his misfortunes, has a *right* to receive at least the bare necessaries of life, without being obliged to depend on the uncertain benevolence of private individuals, and can enforce this right before the authorities, not as a favour, but as the provision of a law that is no less sacred than that which protects rights of property."

The application of this law caused most serious embarrassment to England. From year to year the doles distributed, and, consequently, the poor rate, increased to a frightful amount. Thus pauperism became a profitable business; public money went to encourage idleness and vice. If things were allowed to go on in this fashion it was foreseen that, before long, "the entire revenue of England could not suffice to provide for the poor." Indeed, in certain districts the landowners were already selling their property because the taxes on it were in excess of its value. All this had to be stopped, and some new course adopted. Nevertheless, England remained true to her principles. A Commission was appointed to ascertain whether the existent evils proceeded from the principle itself or from the manner

of its application, to see whether science and experience might not find some means of adhering to the principle without danger to the country. Cavour's article summed up the results of the inquiry with astonishing clearness and accuracy, always selecting the most essential points in the enormous mass of details and giving them due emphasis.

The inquiry proved that the evil did not proceed from the principle of the Act, but from its faulty application—from the exaggerated amount of out-door relief, owing to which the unemployed in receipt of out-door relief were frequently better off than labourers in full work. In fact, the parishes where relief was only granted to those who entered the workhouse and worked for it (unless absolutely incapacitated by illness or infirmity), in return for food and lodging of an inferior sort to that which most working men have at home, soon found the number of paupers diminishing, and the poor rate becoming proportionately reduced. Cavour gave an enthusiastic description of the Liverpool workhouse, one of those which had solved the problem in the best way, and spoke of its manager as an eminent benefactor of mankind. The Commission of Inquiry proposed to base the new Poor Law on this Liverpool plan. Cavour wound up by saying that the results achieved by this new Act would show how far it may be possible to solve the great problem, "qui consiste à secourir toutes les misères réelles, sans fomenter la paresse et l'imprévoyance." The results of the new method proved to be so highly satisfactory that England could preserve the ruling principle of the original Act, and there has been no more trouble about the poor rates. We owe gratitude to Senator Chiala for republishing this paper, which was not generally known and does the

utmost honour to the talent and kindliness of the statesman who could say what he said at a moment when throughout Italy and France every one was protesting with horror against the English poor rate.

Even at this day, unfortunately, the same cry has been raised by many of those who seek to conceal their ignorance of facts and even their egotism under a semblance of liberalism and science.

Cavour was so convinced of the truth of his ideas that he propounded them anew in the columns of the *Risorgimento* in the issues of the 11th and 17th March, 1848, when writing on the "Communist question." "Throughout the Continent," he said, "the great majority of statesmen and private individuals openly declare themselves opposed to every system of legalised charity . . . and are equally unanimous in blaming the Poor Law adopted in England. Yet, in the face of this unanimous burst of reprobation, we think ourselves justified in maintaining an entirely opposite opinion, and assuming the defence of a system that, properly applied, is the sole means of saving society from the dangers by which it is threatened. . . . We feel bound to declare that it is absolutely necessary for all countries which have attained to a high degree of prosperity and solidly established wealth to adopt the principle of legalised charity in order to prove that it is a strict social duty *to make it impossible for any one to perish from want of food.*" Such were the views held by Cavour, and believing them to be thoroughly just, we give them in his own words, having no space for a careful examination of their merits.

Even earlier than 1835 the circumstances of Count Cavour's life had been notably altered. His father having been nominated Mayor of Turin, he was

charged with the management of the family fortune, which was invested in important agricultural and commercial enterprises. The young man undertook the task with the greatest reluctance, seeing that it distracted him both from politics and study. But after the first plunge into business he took the deepest interest in this novel occupation, which, as he said in one of his letters, "although undertaken as a duty, it soon became a pleasure." The special gift and scope of his existence was that of being a leader of men and director of great affairs. At that time there was no possible opening for him in political life. "In spite of my being so thoroughly of the *juste milieu*, I am too much opposed to the system on which things are done here." Accordingly, he decided to devote himself exclusively to agriculture. Had not unforeseen events suddenly thrown him into the arena of high politics, he might have passed his whole life in augmenting his own fortune, while also promoting the welfare and interests of his tenantry, without caring for anything else, and without, perhaps, emerging from obscurity. Cavour was neither an enthusiast nor a visionary, nor would it have been possible for him to be a conspirator. And on this point he resembled many of the greatest statesmen known to history, Cromwell and Washington included. Nevertheless, his friend Baron Cassio was almost right when, after advising the youthful Cavour to give his attention to (public) affairs, he went on to say that "the men best qualified to destroy things are not always the best fitted to build them up again." Even the fervour of Cavour's devotion to political and religious freedom was more akin to the tenacity of a Galileo in discovering and observing the laws of nature than to the inspired

fervour of a neophyte. He never found it necessary to employ high-sounding words, even in speaking of acts of virtue; on the contrary, it was enough for him to feel and be able to prove that the strength of society increases proportionately with the increase of virtue, and that without virtue it would fall to pieces, just as the planetary system would fall into chaos but for the law of universal gravitation.

At one period, therefore, Cavour seemed to be entirely removed from any thought of politics. On the 23rd of March, 1836, he wrote to some one that he was too busy growing rice to be able to answer his friends' letters. On the 4th of September he wrote: "I have plunged into great speculations. . . . I cannot do anything by halves; once launched in business, I think of nothing else." But the air was already charged with the electric current of politics, and now and again, turning his eyes from his vast ricefields, he would give a piercing glance to the world's stage and deplore his inability to play a part on it. Some of his letters during those years mark strange alternations of feeling. He will suddenly change his theme to flash a vivid light on the great events occurring in Europe. But he will turn away from these with equal unexpectedness, and go on with what he was saying concerning the cultivation of rice, Indian corn, or asparagus.

In 1835 Cavour had paid short visits to England, France, Belgium, and the Roman States. While in London, he was mainly occupied with the problems to which we have already alluded, and likewise with the Irish question. In Paris he called on Guizot, but would not repeat the visit. "One must be a person of some eminence," he wrote, "to secure the attention of people of that sort. Et moi, hélas!

obscur citoyen du Piemont, je n'ai rien fait pour être connu au de là des limites de la commune, dont je suis syndic, et je ne peux aspirer raisonnablement à la societé des astres lumineux qu'éclairent le monde politique." So he returned to his farm-work for a considerable time. On the 2nd of October, 1842, he wrote as follows to Pietro Derossi di Santa Rosa: "Fais moi l'amitié de me dire si mes vaches sont arrivées aux Mollie, afin que je puisse les envoyer chercher. Si tu avais fait emplette pour mon compte d'un taureau, tu le joindrais au convoi. Tu me permettras de t'offrir deux petits cochons anglais," &c. But during the same month he tells De la Rive that the life he has to lead is paralysing his brain, and accordingly, he intends to write some articles for the *Revue Universelle* that had been started in Switzerland. The discussion on public instruction that was going on in France had absorbed all his attention, especially where it touched upon the Jesuit schools. So although political matters had been driven out through the door, they seemed about to come back by the window.

In 1842 an Agrarian Society was established in Piedmont to promote the general welfare of the country by developing its resources. Cavour was one of the most hard-working members, writing, making speeches, and continually occupied with agricultural concerns, but without losing sight of social questions, which naturally pave the way to politics. In fact, this Agrarian Society was rapidly becoming a political association. Thereupon Cavour went travelling again, and came back more zealous than ever to increase the prosperity of the Piedmontese people, in whom he had the strongest faith. As he put it at the time, "The French are a valiant

people, the English a great people, but this little-known and disregarded Piedmont is inferior to none. Were I Minister to Charles Albert, I should try to make Austria tremble, and to astonish the world." And later on, in a letter to the Duke di Dino, he said : " Le Piemont, j'ose le dire, est encore un des pays où la loyauté et l'honneur sont les plus appreciés."

But as yet the times were not ripe for him, so he still devoted his attention to agricultural and private affairs. In 1845 he took a great deal of trouble about the education of the child of one of his herdsmen. He placed him under the care of a personal friend, who was to provide the boy with all that was needful and arrange a suitable course of study for him ; and in a series of straightforward, friendly letters, he often recurred to the subject.

In 1846 he experienced the terrible grief of losing his mother, and the letter he wrote at that time to Madame Matilda de la Rive deserves to be reproduced : " Sorrow draws old friends together : so I am not afraid to pour out my heart to you, and ask you for the sole consolation that can alleviate our grief : truly heartfelt sympathy. You knew my dear mother so well, that I am sure that you mourn her like a daughter, and that at this moment you feel a sisterly affection for my Gustavo and even for myself. Your tender, devoted soul was in close sympathy with my mother, who was all tenderness and devotion. You were made to understand each other. Heaven has snatched her from us, has deprived us of the constant joy of her dear and valued presence. Yet her influence was most beneficial, for she inspired all who were near her with the love of goodness and virtue. In all truth I may say that whatever little goodness I have is entirely due to her. In her company one felt

oneself grow better; egotistic impulses shrank away, and one felt the need of improving in order to be less unlike her."

At last, in 1847, politics came to the front in Italy, as everywhere else. Cavour's letters of this period to M. de la Rive treat of the Corn Laws, and vigorously plead the cause of the good Robert Peel, "who has not done so badly in saving his country at the expense of old friendships" ("qui n'a pas si mal fait de sauver son pays au prix de ses anciennes amitiés").

But he speaks very harshly of Lord Palmerston, whose acquaintance he had yet to make. He was constantly harping with the same insistency on his old theory of the *juste milieu*, and combating the ultra-conservative ideas of the kinsman he addressed. But down to the August of this year (1847) his political utterances were still interrupted by considerations as to the cultivation of his various crops. In September, however, we are nearing the moment when Cavour was to renounce everything in favour of politics. In a letter of the 6th September we find him advising his relative not to think of settling in Savoy. "It were better to remain in Geneva or go to France. As Savoy is at present, it is no fit place of abode for a Genevese; you would be a constant subject of anxiety to the authorities. *Si elle change, ce sera pour devenir Français*, in which case you might as well settle in France at once." Then he goes on to say: "Here, we are in a very agitated state. The reforms made by the Pope have raised men's spirits, while Austria's brutal deeds have redoubled our former hatred of foreign rule. This is a healthy agitation, for it recalls the Italian people to life. If our own rulers can succeed in being firm yet

conciliatory, daring yet prudent, our resurrection can be accomplished without internal strife."

It was then that he started a new journal in Turin, entitled *Il Risorgimento*. As we all know, Cavour took a leading part in this paper, and by expounding his ruling ideas became a combatant in the political arena. "Thanks to the reforms achieved we are now on the road to progress. We have only to pursue it. Nevertheless, our path is still encumbered with obstacles: we have to fight against the exaggerated storming of the Left, and to struggle through the sandbanks of the retrograde Right" (November 10, 1847). The struggle, in fact, began at once. "All goes well. The only dangerous question is that of Austria, who is doing her utmost to precipitate the course of events, by adopting a policy as fatal to herself as to others." "Apparently Providence has ordained the overthrow of that Power, inasmuch as it is urging the rulers of the State to perpetrate acts of inconceivable folly." "I trust that our statute will sanction religious freedom; otherwise I shall work against it even at the risk of alienating the clergy, who have been favourable to us so far, and might manage to ruin us if they joined with the Radicals" (February 13, 1848, in a letter to Matilda de la Rive).

In March he wrote to Dr. L. Cerise, of Paris, congratulating him on having undertaken an exhaustive study of the great social question, "which is the one that concerns us more deeply than all the rest." "Nevertheless, I fail to discern any fruitful ideas in those propounded by Louis Blanc and his followers. I am convinced that the problem must be worked out, and that we ought to decide at once in what direction to go. But society has to steer between two equally

dangerous reefs: non-recognition of the course prescribed by fate to mankind on the one hand; on the other, seeking to act regardless of time, which is an indispensable element in all great social changes."

At this point our sketch must naturally end. Cavour's political life is known to all the world and belongs to the history of our liberation from foreign rule. It is true that the new documents discovered by Chiala contain some fresh particulars of Cavour's career in Parliament and in the Cabinet, as also about his famous duel with the Deputy Avigdor. But, after all, they are merely minuter details of thoroughly well-known facts. For our present purpose the main point was to profit by the new light thrown on the earlier part of Cavour's life. Thanks to that new light we are able to trace step by step the evolution of the mighty mind and daring soul by means of which the redemption of our country was mainly achieved.

LUIGI SETTEMBRINI

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Luigi Settembrini.

LUIGI SETTEMBRINI[1]

It has been frequently remarked that exactly while the Bourbon tyranny was raging in Naples and doing its utmost to crush down and corrupt every class of society, there lived certain Neapolitans of such high moral worth, such unflinching courage and patriotism, that they could only be compared with the legendary heroes of ancient times. Be this as it may, Luigi Settembrini was decidedly a man of this lofty stamp.

Yet he filled no great position in the political world. He held a post of secondary importance, and only for a brief space. Nor had he any opportunity of winning glory in the field. Throughout his life he was working for the liberation of his country, but never attained to the celebrity and influence of his colleague and fellow-sufferer, Carlo Poerio. "I have always lived among books," he wrote, "but unfortunately gained scant profit and much sorrow from them. In society I seem almost a fool, and have very little to say, because I don't know how to talk." Though much beloved and respected as a professor, he was less popular than some of his colleagues. His principal

[1] This essay appeared in the *Rassegna Settimanale* before Settembrini's "Recollections" had been published.

work, "Lessons on Italian Literature,"[1] excited much hostile criticism that was not altogether undeserved. Nevertheless, when the true history of our civil and political liberation comes to be written, when we possess a complete edition of Settembrini's works, including his "Recollections" and his letters, and if, finally, some competent biographer should make an analytical study of the writer and the man, faithfully depicting him in every aspect—as teacher, conspirator, husband, father, and friend—he would find that Luigi Settembrini was a true hero. And every reader of the history of his life will be touched by the same emotion that stirred all who knew him personally, that is to say, by the strongest impulse, when thinking of him, to bend the knee in homage to a greatness of soul that appeared superhuman in its simpleness and modesty.

Settembrini was born in Naples in 1813, and by 1836 was already married and had successfully competed for the Professorship of Literature at the University of Catanzaro. In that city he taught his eager students to appreciate the great Italian authors, and carried on, *sub rosa*, an active propaganda for the unity of Italy. A year or two later he was arrested and taken to Naples. Nothing could be proved against him, but, although acquitted by his judges, he was kept a prisoner for three years and a half, only obtaining his release in 1842. Meanwhile he had lost his professorship, and could only support his young wife and children by going from house to house giving lessons in grammar. While busily engaged in this daily grind, and taking every precaution that occurred to him to insure the safety of his dear ones, he was steadfastly conspiring for the

[1] "Lezioni di Letteratura Italiana."

good cause against the increasing tyranny of the reactionary Bourbon rule.

In 1847 a clandestinely printed and anonymous pamphlet, entitled "A Protest from the People of the Two Sicilies," was suddenly circulated in Naples. It had the effect of a bombshell, for it was an outburst of irrepressible indignation from one whose words voiced all the woes of the nation. It said nothing of this or that form of government, nothing of unity or independence; it merely asserted the people's right to be allowed to live honestly.

"The present Government is a huge pyramid, the base of which consists of policemen and priests, and has the King for its apex. Every *employé*, from the common soldier to the general, from the gendarme to the Minister of Police, from the village priest to the King's own confessor, every scribbler even, is a merciless tyrant to those beneath him and the most abject of slaves towards his superiors. Hence those who are not among the oppressors are crushed on all sides under the feet of a thousand scoundrels, and the liberty, peace, and property of honest men depend on the whim, not only of the Prince or one of his Ministers, but also on that of any petty hireling, any prostitute, any spy, any Jesuit. Oh, my Italian brothers, do not consider these words too harsh, do not write in your newspapers that we ought to speak with greater moderation and prudence; rather come amongst us, come and feel as we feel how a red-hot hand of iron is searing us and tearing out our hearts; come and suffer as we suffer; then write and give us counsel."

The pamphlet declared in conclusion that arms were the only cure, but that first of all it was necessary to make public protest in the sight of the civilised world.

This was the explanation of the pamphlet and its title.

No one who is ignorant of the state of things in Naples at that time can possibly realise the courage required to publish such a protest as this, or the effect it necessarily produced. Then, too, as there was a general feeling that only Settembrini could have written it, and as every page showed the stamp of his individuality, he was forced to save himself by flight, and leave his family to take their chance. Then followed in rapid succession the revolution, the Constitution granted by the King, and the sanguinary reaction of the 15th of May, 1848. Next, we again find Settembrini a captive in the dungeons of Castel Capuano, subjected to an iniquitous sham trial with Poerio and other patriots, and all lumped together with a gang of common criminals. In 1850 he undertook his own defence, and Poerio adopted the same method. He used no legal quibbles in his pleading, but openly declared that the proceedings were a mass of lies, and "that to look for a grain of truth among them would be like seeking for historical facts in Ariosto's 'Orlando Furioso.'" The court was determined to find him guilty because he was a friend of liberty and remained true to his past. "In my opinion there are only two parties in the world—that of honest men and that of scoundrels. I have always taken pains to go with the honest men, without caring what they were called, for I have seen many infamies committed by so-called Liberals as well as by Royalists, Absolutists, or Constitutionalists. I worship liberty, for it signifies to me the power of enjoying one's just rights without detriment to those of others, and it also signifies strict justice, order, respect, obedience to the laws and to established authorities. Such is the liberty

demanded by honest men, the liberty to which I am devoted, and if to love it be a crime, I avow my guilt and submit to be punished for it." He wound up by saying that the Constitution had guaranteed liberty, therefore the men who had persuaded the sovereign to cancel it were evildoers who had made a perjurer of their King.

The history of this trial, throughout which the hypocritical Bourbon affected a show of publicity and legal fairness, almost resembles the development of an heroic poem. One day when Settembrini was brought into the dock the hall was crowded with an inquisitive audience, including a large number of police spies and all the diplomats in Naples. The prisoner was escorted by armed men, and there were guards on every side. He had presented a document containing irrefutable proofs that the most serious accusation against him proceeded from a spy in the pay of the police, a fact that, according to the Neapolitan code, rendered it null and void. But the President of the court threw this document into the waste-paper basket without giving it a glance.

Settembrini's blood boiled at this, and amid the general and amazed silence that followed the act he calmly eyed the assembled public and said, in a loud voice: "Since no notice is taken of the documentary proofs I have produced, I decline to continue my defence, and simply proclaim to the civilised world the infamy of my judges." After that it was certain that he would be condemned to death.

In fact, on the 31st of January, 1851, the "Great Court" withdrew to the Council Chamber and remained there all night. On February 1st the death sentence was read to the public. Earlier in the day, at 8 o'clock a.m., Settembrini wrote to his wife,

and we subjoin some passages from this farewell letter :—

"My darling, unhappy wife, to thee who hast shared all my troubles, I must and will write at this moment, when my fate is about to be decided by the judges after a sixteen hours' sitting. If I am sentenced to death I shall never see thee again, never see the dear, dear children thou hast borne to me. But just now that I am able to face everything calmly I can have a last little talk with thee. Oh, my own Gigia, I am calm and prepared for any fate. . . . If condemned to die I can promise, for our love's sake, for the love of our children, that thy Luigi will be true to himself; that I shall die in the firm assurance that my blood will bear good fruit to my country; I shall die with the quiet courage of our martyrs; I shall die, and my last words will be addressed to my fatherland, to my Gigia, my Raffaello, my Giulia. My death on the gallows will be no disgrace to thee or to our darling children. The day will come when it will bring honour to you all. Meanwhile, I know how thou wilt be crushed with grief, but brace thy heart to bear it, my Gigia, and take courage to live for the sake of our dear babes, and tell them that my soul will be ever with you three, that I shall behold you, hear your voices, and continue to love you, as I have always loved and still love you in this terrible hour. . . . Bid the children remember the declaration I made in court the day I pleaded my own cause. Tell them that, together with a thousand blessings, a thousand kisses, I bequeath them three precepts: To know and worship God; to love work; to love their country above all else. My own dearest wife were these the joys I promised to give thee in the early days of our love? . . ."

When this letter was published the *Edinburgh Review* declared it to be one of the most eloquent pages in Italian literature. But it is more than an example of eloquence: it is an imperishable record, sufficient in itself for any mortal's glory. No father could bequeath to his sons a nobler inheritance than this.

The death sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life, and to the year 1859 Settembrini was confined with his friend Spaventa in the convict prison at Santo Stefano, herded with brigands and assassins of the worst type. Should the expected "Recollections" be carried on to this point, we shall have a narrative of the strangest, most unimaginable experiences.

The following anecdote has already appeared in print: One summer night two goatherds who had been sentenced to the galleys were pacing a terrace in the prison yard and gazing ecstatically at the starlit sky. Said one of them to the other, "How I'd like to have as many sheep as there are stars up above." "Where would you pasture them?" asked his companion. "In your meadow." "What, in my meadow?" "I tell you I'd do it. . . ." A few minutes later one of the two men fell to the ground, stabbed to death by the other.

Settembrini and Spaventa were much impressed by this crime and made it the theme of long ethical discussions. One day they were resting on their pallets, which stood end to end against the wall of their cell, chatting with each other on various topics. One of the two happened to say that the train from Naples to Castellamare always stopped at Resina to take in water. . . . "Resina! Nonsense! It stops at Granatello." "Don't talk rubbish!" And in a minute or so the two friends and close companions were on their

feet and exchanging furious glances. But suddenly they both burst out laughing and exclaimed: "Yet we were talking like philosophers the other day!" Thereupon they fell into each other's arms, and their brotherly affection was only increased by the passing tiff.

Their cruel confinement lasted for eight years, during which time Settembrini, though only possessing the Greek text, without notes, and an incomplete Greek-Italian dictionary, undertook and finished the fine translation of Lucian's "Dialogues" that was subsequently published at Florence. At last came the year 1859, bearing a blast of ill omen to tyrants, and King Ferdinand II., with his keen scent for danger, resolved to throw a sop to public opinion by discontinuing the scandalous crime of condemning honest men to the same penalty as assassins. Accordingly, Settembrini and sixty-five other political prisoners were put on board the *Stromboli*, which was towed across to Cadiz, where an American sailing vessel had been chartered to convey them to the United States. They were already well out to sea, two hundred miles beyond Cape St. Vincent, when the under steward, a Southern-looking youth, who called himself a Cuban, ran down below, opened his kit, and after donning the uniform of an English officer, came up on deck and ordered the captain to change his course and return to Europe. The youth was Settembrini's son Raffaello. He had been brought up in England by his fellow-countryman, Panizzi, and having afterwards entered the service of an English steam company, chanced to be in Lisbon when the Neapolitan boats touched at Cadiz, and learning what had happened, applied for the post of steward on the American ship. The prisoners were many, and some in fair health; the captain's contract

would not have held good in America, and he had already been paid for the job; young Settembrini was qualified to take command of the vessel, and on European shores his English uniform imposed respect. So the course of the *David Stuart* was reversed, the prisoners were landed in Ireland, and after a brief halt in London, joyfully returned to Italy in time to share in the events that established the independence and unity of their country.

Settembrini gave his whole strength to this work; but when party disputes began he was soon forced to recognise his unfitness for political life. Naturally enough, he was often invited to come forward as a candidate for this or that borough. But whenever he was asked, "What is your programme, which party do you go with?" he would only reply: "My programme is to fulfil my duty, my party is the party of honest men. If you do not know all about me, and my past life is not considered a sufficient guarantee, why do you invite me to stand for your town?" So the electors dropped away from him. It is easy to see that this was not the way to get on in political life anywhere, and least of all in Italy. But he could not change his nature, and was therefore content to obtain a professorship with too small a stipend to suffice for the maintenance of his family. So he slaved unceasingly, producing pamphlets, essays and newspaper articles, but always planning work of a higher kind.

Once, in reply to an influential friend, who asked if the Government could do anything for him, he said: "Yes! Pray get me an appointment as Inspector of Schools. I should like to see all Italy before I die, and cannot afford to travel at my own expense."

This was all that he asked, and all that he obtained. However, shortly before his death, when already aged

and infirm, Marco Minghetti made him a Senator, and in 1875 his first and last speech in that capacity horrified his audience in the Upper House. For his colleagues felt transported to another world on hearing this broken-down veteran, more enfeebled by illness and the effects of past hardships than by actual old age, inveighing against taxation and demanding the closest economy. "The taxable strength of Italy is exhausted. We have piled tax upon tax. This is truly the realm of Vespasian, who taxed even urine, and when his son Titus exclaimed that it was a 'stinking tax,' promptly gave him the sum it had yielded, saying, '*This does not stink!*'"

Next he alluded to the tribulations of the masses, to the risk of exciting a social question, and concluded by declaring that the reforms for which he pleaded were absolutely indispensable, "and if not carried out by ourselves will be assuredly accomplished by a Dictator, or—*by force of petroleum.*" It is easy to realise the effect of such a speech in the Senate; but it was natural to Settembrini to use forcible words, and he invariably persisted in openly expressing every idea that he had in his mind. He had never quailed before the Bourbon tyrant of Naples, and was now equally undaunted by fear of ridicule, though even the bravest of us may find it harder to face the derision of valued friends than the wrath of a cruel despot.

But the patriot's career was drawing to an end, for he died in the following November (1876), worn out by the complicated ailments from which he had suffered for years.

The closing period of Settembrini's life was peaceful and sufficiently happy, for he had discovered literary labour to be his true field of action and the best and dearest purpose to which he could worthily devote all the

strength that was left in him. His so-called "Lessons on Italian Literature"[1] is a stout work in three volumes, constituting a real history of Italian literature. As we have already said, the book contains many defects, and even some blunders. Settembrini knew little of the extensive researches that had been made on the origin of our language and literature, or on the sources of the Italian Romances of Chivalry. For he was entirely ignorant of the German works on the subject, and, worse still, felt an ignorant contempt for them. He was versed in the history of Italy, and had devoted much study and thought to the Italian and French authors who have made it their theme; nevertheless, his historical equipment was that of the old-fashioned patriot, who sought to use his knowledge as a weapon against tyrants, priests, and Popes, heedless of the anachronisms and contradictions of which he was guilty. His old hatred of priests and the Papacy had become his ruling passion, and it seemed to rise to boiling-point when he saw some of his dearest friends stooping to compromise for political ends, and almost playing the part of neo-Guelphs. He even rejected the formula of *A free Church in a free State*, for, as he put it, "The Church in Italy is a State that wars against the Italian State, so I will not grant it a free hand."

Settembrini's character seemed made of iron, as if hammered into shape by some inward and inborn force, so that nothing could break, nothing bend it, in spite of the large element it included of amiability and kindness. Although trained in the literary schoo of Marquis Puoti, for whom he cherished and from whom he received much affection, he had never adopted his master's style of writing. The good and

[1] "Lezioni di Letteratura Italiana." Naples.

learned Marquis was a pedant of the first water, who had derived his very strained and affected style from over-imitation of mediæval authors. Settembrini's, on the contrary, was simple, clear, and elegant, his phraseology almost as crisp as that of a born Tuscan. He detested every kind of affectation, every attempt to copy other writers. A pupil of his once said that Settembrini's tomb should bear the following inscription: "*Here lies the enemy of the Bourbons, Jesuits, and Inasmuches!*"[1] And this was perfectly true. For in his politics he was the foe of all tyrants, in real life of all falsehood, and in art of every affectation. On witnessing the general enthusiasm for Gioberti in 1847, he promptly declared his anti-clerical views in his celebrated "Protest."[2] Although he was living in Naples when Hegel's philosophy seemed to be carrying the University there by storm, he remained steadily opposed to every metaphysical abstraction, and only cared for classical, concrete, established knowledge. Therefore he could be scarcely expected to show more tolerance to others than he had shown to himself.

His "Lessons in Italian Literature" show us that whenever he finds a writer entirely to his taste, this writer is *bound* to be a patriot, and an enemy to priests and Pope. But when the facts too openly contradict his view of the case, Settembrini comes to a pause and begins to weary of the author in question. Often likewise, while enthusiastically discussing some favourite poet and lauding the divine beauty of his work—beauty being the quality that most strongly appealed to him—if he chanced to recall the hostile

[1] "Degli imperciocchè."

[2] The previously mentioned "Protest of the People of the Two Sicilies."

verdict of some clerical commentator of the work, he would interrupt his eulogy to vent his wrath on the unlucky critic, and deal him blow after blow until he had—figuratively—smashed him to pieces. Yet there was no personal animus in these attacks; he had no rancour, no hatred for any man, but unceasingly defended his principles by making the fiercest war on whatever he considered to be wrong. Accordingly, the reader will understand why Settembrini's "Lessons on Literature" should be so open to severe and angry criticism. Indeed, they have been subjected to a great deal of it, and occasionally assailed with much dexterity and learning. But the book still lives, is increasingly popular with Italian youths, with cultured persons of all ages, and is rapidly gaining a firmer footing in our schools. Nor is its popularity confined to Southern Italy, for it is equally diffused in Tuscany, Lombardy, and other parts of the country.

The critic must not concentrate his attention on the faults of a book, but should also dwell on its merits, and the "Lessons on Literature" contains many. It was justly remarked by De Sanctis that this book constitutes Settembrini's last and greatest fight for the liberation, independence, and glory of his country. Herein we see the qualities of the man converted into literary merits. The writer's honesty and straightforwardness are displayed in the limpid precision of his style, while his conscientious devotion to work is proved at every page. He has studied every one of the authors he mentions, and he frankly gives his opinion of them all. His judgments may sometimes be faulty, but they are neither borrowed nor imitated from any one else; they are always the views of a man of taste and talent, who by reason of his sound classical training detests all affectations or tricks of

style. In his ever-conscientious survey of literature he sometimes lights upon certain branches of it which had been neglected by all his predecessors. For instance, his history was the first to include a critical study of the despatches and reports of Italian ambassadors, the first also to treat them as literary works. He was likewise one of the first to supply a full and exact appreciation of all Pontano's writings. But at other times his inordinate sympathy for this or that author leads him too far, and into a maze of exaggeration.

But the ruling idea of the work, the *leit-motiv* that gives it a special character of its own, is the author's settled belief that Italian literature constitutes, as it were, the very soul of the nation, which has been gradually moulded in harmony with it throughout the ages. According to Settembrini, Italian literature arose and developed by pursuing the opposite aim to that of mediæval mysticism, which it attacks and destroys ; it was developed by adhering to the ancient classics ; by seeking to attain reality, liberty, freedom of conscience, beauty, and truth ; by warring against prejudice and superstition. All the noblest, most generous elements of the national conscience assume an ideal shape and substance in the new divinity whom Settembrini adores, and to whom his whole life is devoted. This ideal alone could save Italy from total annihilation when, in the sixteenth century, a moral canker was threatening to sap the life and strength of the nation. It must come again to the rescue now that small party passions, personal jealousies, are unloosed, and, after making us neglect our duty towards the people we have left plunged in misery and almost reduced to despair, are now threatening to cast society fettered and helpless at the

feet of the Jesuits. That, indeed, was Settembrini's dominant idea, the sole reason that could induce him, who, from his earliest days, had given himself to politics, to achieve political ends, now to exchange that career for a secluded literary life. Even in his study, however, though the world scarcely knew it, he continued to do sacrifice at the shrine of his former divinity.

Settembrini's "History" is neither critical nor scientific, nor is it solely a work of art; rather it is an action, a continual fight, and only rendered a work of art by being the eloquent, living expression of the purest, most ardent devotion that ever stirred the human heart. As others have frequently done, we, too, might ransack the book to see what fresh material it contributes to our knowledge, and to note what errors it contains, without observing other points. But for a biographical paper no such examination could suffice, inasmuch as it would fail to grasp all that is best and most inspired both in the man and in his book, the one being inseparable from the other. For, with all its defects and misstatements, Settembrini's history of Italian literature will always have the magic charm of expressing the lofty, intelligent, and firmly rooted convictions which animated the writer and excite at every page the reader's respect and admiration. Indeed, on reaching the end of the book one is moved to declare—remembering the man who wrote it—these were the qualities that called Italy back to life, and these alone will keep Italy safe, unless the seeds of them be cast to the winds by the rising generation in the excess of its critical and sceptical pride. So we are moved to raise prayerful eyes to the image of our beloved master, and cry with all our heart: Make us worthy to be somewhat like thee!

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FRANCESCO DE SANCTIS

I

Who was Professor De Sanctis? What were his chief merits as a critic and writer? As one of his oldest surviving pupils, one of the most intimate of his friends, I have been asked to give my recollections of him. Yet the fact of that valued intimacy makes it hard to write impartially of a man I loved so well.

It is generally recognised that the extraordinary honours accorded to his memory in Naples were addressed to De Sanctis the patriot, as well as to De Sanctis the professor and writer. But all who were privileged to study under him can bear witness that his teachings—particularly in the years before 1848—stirred young Naples to a pitch of enthusiasm such as no words could express. He had the gift of dominating his hearers, of quickening their feelings as well as their brains. Consequently, he was loved, honoured, and admired by his pupils to an extent of which few teachers either in old or modern days can have had any experience. Some one has suggested that with all respect for De Sanctis's undeniable talent, the extraordinary enthusiasm of his students was partly due to the peculiar condition of public instruction in Naples at that date, and to the inflammable nature of Southerners—especially in early youth—

rather than to any abnormal power, literary or scientific, on the part of their beloved Professor. But this theory is knocked to pieces by the following fact. After 1850, the vicissitudes of exile brought De Sanctis to Turin. Having published no books at that date, he was still unknown to Northern Italians, yet among a people so unlike his fellow-citizens, and with an audience of grown men instead of hot-headed boys, his lectures on the "Divina Commedia" aroused as much wild enthusiasm as in Naples. Indeed, he often said that those were the happiest days of his life, because it was then that he first became conscious of his own powers. When these Dante lectures and some of his critical essays appeared in the Turin Reviews, his fame quickly spread throughout Italy. Certainly this would not have been the case had his work been poor in quality. Yet nowadays certain eminent writers decry the De Sanctis method of criticism, styling it exaggeratedly systematic, full of abstract formulas, but lacking scientific accuracy, and therefore really hurtful, inasmuch as it distracts the young student from the true path of the new historical criticism that is so thoroughly well proven and safe. The only way of answering these objections is by impartially defining the nature and value of De Sanctis's writings.

He first appears upon the scene as an unpretending teacher, and in order to form an estimate of his labours in the schoolroom, one must recall his surroundings and the state of his native city at that time. Reaction was raging throughout Italy, and most of all in the kingdom of Naples, where learning, accordingly, was at the lowest ebb. The youth of our Southern provinces had to be educated in clerical seminaries, where they were taught Latin by means of the obsolete Port Royal grammar, imbibed rhetoric from the

manual of De Colonia, philosophy from that of Padre Soave ; while, more or less on the sly, the boys read some eighteenth-century philosophers—both French and Italian—narratives of the French Revolution, the Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, and so on. The Italian classics were abominably neglected, and the boys wrote a lingo that was neither Italian nor French. In this state of things crowds of young students came to Naples to prosecute their studies in the numerous private schools which were opened now that the University had little more than a nominal existence and was hardly frequented at all. Among the recently started schools was one for the study of the Italian language, founded by the Marquis Basilio Puoti, a rich nobleman of kindly disposition and devoted to literary pursuits, who gave gratuitous instruction in his own palace to all who cared to apply to him.

In an essay entitled "The Last of the Purists," De Sanctis gives a faithful picture of this school, and of the method of teaching pursued in it. The pupils began with the easiest of the Trecento writers, but had only to study their wording and phraseology ; then they passed on to writers who were stylists, and first of all to books of a simple style, such as Villani's Chronicles, the "Fioretti" of Saint Francis, and the "Deeds of Æneas." Afterwards they had to study subtler and more artificial authors, such as Dino Compagni, Passavanti, and last of all, Boccaccio. The same method was applied to writers of the Cinquecento. The Marquis admired Machiavelli, but of all his works preferred the most artificial, and especially his account of the Plague after the manner of Boccaccio,[1]

[1] A highly artificial production erroneously attributed—at that time—to Machiavelli's pen.

and certain orations he had placed in the mouths of the historical personages described. We pupils carefully filled our notebooks with fine tricks of speech, endeavoured to round off our periods, and zealously studied our grammars and manuals of rhetoric. I was considered to be a skilled hunter of words and phrases, and while my companions were disputing the merits of this or that expression, I would snatch at some word and ask, "Is this an *Italian* word?" . . . To the Marquis words seemed to have the glitter of gold. He was always talking of words of fine or of bad alloy, words of the best alloy, or words of pure gold. So every one became accustomed to writing with a dictionary in front of him and a notebook of phrases from which all words of bad alloy had been weeded out. The Marquis had far less difficulty in forgiving bad grammar and even bad spelling than defective phraseology. On this head he was inexorable, and had a special hatred of all Frenchified expressions. In his opinion, elegant writing consisted in avoiding every word and turn of phrase that were in common use, and substituting others unknown to everyday speech, such as *saper grado e grazia* for "to offer thanks"; *essere di credere* for "believe"; *tener per fermo* for "to be sure"; *essere tenero e sollecito per una cosa* for "to greatly desire a thing." The words "society" and "social" were forbidden, and the word *socio* was to be *sozio* instead. Being ordered one day to compose an address to young men, I happened to write: "Some of you study theology, medicine, or jurisprudence." The Marquis immediately corrected the sentence thus: "There are some who study divinity, some who give their labour to medical science, many to civil and canonical law." Importance was given to the word itself and to the mechanical part of composition, and in the quest for purity of

expression nothing was clearly expressed. Every one ended by writing in the same way, for even the slowest pupils attained to this superexcellent style, a fact in which the Marquis, who had no nose for real talent, took the greatest pride.[1] Nevertheless the foundation of this school seemed a grand event to us at that period. The desire to write good Italian and discard foreign modes of speech was a sign of the times and almost a patriotic demonstration.

The Marquis was most affectionate with us all. Master and pupils formed a united family group; always working and discussing together. Young men poured in from the country with their heads crammed with French notions, with a jumble of desultory reading and knowing next to nothing of our classics or of literary art. But when the Marquis set them to work they were compelled to re-arrange their ideas and express them in an orderly manner. The best pupils, including Settembrini and De Sanctis, speedily acquired a method of their own. In fact, De Sanctis tells us that, before joining the class, he had made summaries and copied many fragments from numerous philosophical works, and had also stuffed his brains with tragedies, comedies, romances, and history, but never dreaming that it was necessary to learn his native tongue, had felt quite amazed when a friend insisted on taking him

[1] This description is derived almost word for word from the essays of De Sanctis, particularly from the one entitled "The Last of the Purists." As I too had published a description of the Marquis Puoti's school that has been accused of undue harshness and prejudice, I thought it well to include De Sanctis's account of it, which coincides almost exactly with my own.

Vide De Sanctis, "Saggi Critici," pp. 508–28 (Naples: Morano, 1869), and "Nuovi Saggi Critici," pp. 325 and 335 (Naples: Morano, 1872).

to Puoti's school. Once there, however, he quickly became a most diligent pupil. At the same time, the school produced many teachers of inferior merit who blindly followed Puoti's ideas. Consequently certain *quasi* secondary schools were opened, chiefly in Naples, where little instruction was given save in Latin, in the art of selecting phrases from Trecento and Cinquecento writers for the embellishment of the pupils' compositions, and in patiently studying grammars and handbooks of rhetoric. I had reached this second stage, and realised its bad effects on myself, my school-fellows, and my relations, who were all under the sway of the same erroneous theories.[1] Accordingly, I wasted the best years of my youth in collecting choice phrases and making summaries of De Colonia and the grammars of Corticelli and Buonmattei. I was forbidden to read Alfieri, Manzoni, or Berchet, for fear of spoiling my style and, for the same reason, all new writers and many classics were equally tabooed.

Foreign literature was barely alluded to. Our own great writers sufficed for us. I had to consult the dictionary in studying literary works in order to see if they contained any Frenchified expressions or other linguistic blunders, if the unities of time and place were respected, if they contained a real

[1] It is easy to understand why some of Puoti's old scholars should have thought my verdict on his doctrines and their effects unjustly severe. Most of these gentlemen only knew Puoti's doctrines after they had completed different courses of study, and at a time when the Marquis was beginning to enforce them in what he styled a supplementary school. But from my early childhood I was trained almost entirely according to his methods, and saw what effects they produced when thoroughly carried out by some of his more zealous pupils and under his own supervision.

protagonist, and if the characters described accorded with pre-established types. Consequently I was dazed, and felt hopeless of recovering my senses.

At that moment I met some young men who attended the new school just opened by De Sanctis, and as soon as I began to talk with them, found myself in a new and delightful world. For they spoke of Manzoni and Berchet, of Dante and Machiavelli, of Schiller, Goethe, and Shakespeare, and admired them all in one way or another. I felt strangely drawn to these new friends, and accompanied them in their walks without opening my mouth. At last, one of them asked, "Why don't you come to De Sanctis's school; you will certainly join it if you once hear him speak." So I went there and the prediction came true. It was in the badly lighted hall of a dilapidated palace in a dark, narrow alley that I first heard De Sanctis speak. What chiefly impressed me was the affection he showed to his pupils, and the delight with which they listened to his words. He had not long cast off the trammels of the old school and was still in search of a new path. One perceived that while addressing us he was deeply moved and expressed his innermost thoughts and feelings. Hence his enthusiasm and ours, hence our mutual affection. The whole school seemed to be boldly marching on with their master to the discovery of truth. He always called us his friends and fellow-workers. His first attempt at teaching, while still subject to Puoti's rule, having been a course of grammar, he was nicknamed the *grammarian*. But even then his natural independence of mind speedily asserted itself. Instead of simply explaining the ordinary rules of etymology and syntax, he also tried to give the history and science

of grammar. Later on, at his own school, the first lesson of the day was always on that subject. But the second hour was devoted to classical authors, or, to put it more precisely, to the history of literature. But there was no hunting for Frenchified terms; no talk of studying words in themselves, apart from the ideas they expressed; no mention of the unities, the protagonist, or of immutable types and archetypes. This sort of thing had vanished for ever. One was no longer confined to the narrow field of the Italian *Trecentisti* and *Cinquecentisti.* All forms of art, all literatures, whether ancient or modern, were accepted, providing they possessed intrinsic value; and this impartiality and independence formed the basis of De Sanctis's character.

Schlegel's "History of Literature" had first put him on this new track. For that author, while studying the drama in its relation to the times and social conditions in which it had arisen, came to the conclusion that every people must have a literature of its own, deriving its chief importance from its national and historical merit. Thus, for the first time, a vast horizon was opened to our gaze. The enormous diversities existing between the literatures of different lands, their want of uniformity with any fixed type, were no longer defects, but advantages, since every literature should exemplify the diversity of national characteristics; for, just as we may equally admire the Parthenon, the Pantheon, the Florentine Duomo or the Cathedral of Cologne, so, too, we may and are bound to admire both Sophocles and Shakespeare, Aristophanes and Molière, Homer and Dante.

So we suddenly found all barriers removed; free admission was given us to every form of human thought, and our national literature gained new im-

portance in our eyes as the living embodiment of the true spirit of Italy. For we realised that in order to ensure the progress and emancipation of the one we must strive for the progress and emancipation of the other. This idea, indeed, though scarcely hinted at in words, was the constant undercurrent that consecrated the school and made it the temple of our faith. We worshipped our master! Politics were never mentioned, for no words were needed on that point. Colletta, Berchet, Gioberti, and Niccolini were devoured by us all, and we often met in secret for the purpose of reading the debates of the English and French Parliaments. Luigi La Vista, the most daring and eloquent of our band, became unspeakably excited by these readings, confusing literary criticism with political passion. More than once we were moved to exclaim: "You seem a martyr to politics," unconscious that our words were prophetic.

Nevertheless, at the end of the course we were troubled by doubts on various points. Knowledge of the relation of a work of art to the period and the country in which it was produced affords no means of deciding on the intrinsic merit of that work. For even while perfectly representing the ideas of some period or people, it may yet be devoid of æsthetic value. How are we to distinguish the special qualities of Greek and Provençal poetry if both are faithful expressions of their respective surroundings? Two authors may be born at the same time and of the same stock, and express its inner spirit, yet be of very different value. By what standard should these be judged? But our Professor had struggled with those problems before they occurred to us, and when he appeared on the platform

the following year he was an altered man. His mind had undergone a second transformation, and this by the influence of Hegel's "Æsthetics." Strictly speaking, the spell had been wrought by the first two volumes of the French version of the book, for he had not seen the rest of it, and being ignorant of German at that time, could not apply to the original text. Hegel stood between the sect that reduces art to the mere imitation and reproduction of nature and the other sect that attributes a moral idea and purpose to art.

According to Hegel, the simple imitation of nature would be purely mechanical work. So far, he was right. In fact, why does photography fail to be art? Where could we find in nature the model of a Pantheon or of a Beethoven symphony? No work of art can exist, continued Hegel, unless it contains thought and idea, or without the creative power of the artist who expresses that idea. Nor can art exist in virtue of the idea alone, or abstract thought alone, the latter being, on the contrary, the basis of science. For in art, idea and form, the abstract conception and its outward expression, are so intermingled that it were impossible to distinguish them apart. The artist's handiwork is required to endue thought with a visible shape, so that it be presented to us as an image or feeling, as a truly living character or personality. The artist seizes upon natural objects, and his imaginative gift converts them into brainstuff of his own, thus employing them to express his own ideas. The merit of a work of art does not consist in the value of the abstract idea in the artist's mind, but in the amount of reality with which he has endued it. Godfrey de Bouillon is a model of virtue, while Iago is a monster

of perversity. Yet the latter has far more æsthetic value, because Shakespeare had made him a more living reality to us. A work of art is destroyed if you separate the form from the idea. It is as though you were to scrape the crimson paint from the lips of a Raphael Madonna and put it on your palette.

At a time when we had rejected all abstract rules, all the immutable types and archetypes of rhetoric—when historical explanations had failed to fill the void left in our intelligence for lack of some guiding principle and standard—this Hegelian philosophy, that showed us how art could transmute the abstract idea into a living reality perceptible to the senses, and therefore taught us to seek the laws of art in the laws of thought and its æsthetic manifestation, had the effect of a life-boat hastening to our rescue across the ocean of doubt in which we were struggling. This, in fact, was now the leading idea in De Sanctis's brain. But, had he confined himself to repeating and reproducing it, he would have been merely an Hegelian of the usual type. But in his case the idea acted as a stimulant to his mind, helped him to discover his own originality, and urged him to found a new school.

The question he asked himself was,—What should be the standard of an art-critic? So far he had tried to explain works of art, point out their defects, and compare them with some pre-established type. But some works, though having few defects, may be of very trifling value, while others, in spite of numerous faults, may be distinctly valuable. Other critics gave their attention to the phraseology, the symbolism, the moral and political ideas, or historic truth to be found in literary works of art. But this sort of criticism merely attempts to force works of art to conform to

our own ideas and laws, instead of trying to discover the author's own ideas and the laws he obeys. A poet, being dominated by the visions of his own brain, does not write down all he has seen, felt, or thought, but merely gives the particulars required to make his conceptions visible and tangible to his readers. The critic, if endowed with a sense of art, is stirred by what he reads or has before his eyes; he enters into the artist's frame of mind, sees all that the latter saw, reconstructs the poem in his own imagination, traces it back to its original source—that is, to the poet's inner consciousness, of which he divines the leading idea. Accordingly, the true critic goes step by step with the author through the patient labour of preparation, watches him in the throes of artistic creation, and in following him, consciously reconstructs all that the author had unconsciously built up by divine inspiration, and, possibly, brings him to a clearer knowledge of his own powers by helping the reader to a full understanding of his work. Also, if the critic have any originality of mind, he can determine the value of the artist and of his work by not only studying them apart, but likewise by investigating their relation to their special period and to history in general.[1]

But the true merit of De Sanctis depends less on the precepts he enounced than on his power of putting them into practice. He had an unrivalled gift of discovering at first sight the animating principle and absolute value of any work of art; the faculty of reducing it to its primary elements and then reconstructing it in eloquent words and with much force of imagination. He would do this, not only when examining some great masterpiece as an organic whole, but also in discussing some episode, sonnet, or

[1] *Vide* "Saggi Critici," pp. 358–59, 362.

personage. Even in discussing some work of slighter value, the comparisons he drew and his original remarks as to why it missed being a masterpiece gave special distinction to all that he said. And, thanks to his true feeling for art, his words generally hit the mark. He was the first to teach the youth of Naples to appreciate Leopardi's poetry at its real worth, so that it was enormously popular in Naples while as yet hardly known to the rest of Italy. Under De Sanctis, therefore, the study of literature became a study of mankind and human thought, that taught us to understand ourselves and helped to emancipate our minds. Is it surprising that we should have so dearly loved and worshipped the man to whom we owed those blessings? He had freed us from bondage, as it were; he had struck off our fetters; he had made us yearn for future days of virtue and freedom! He carried on the same propaganda from his professorial chair in the Military Academy of Naples that furnished so many volunteers to our War of Independence, so many defenders to beleaguered Venice.

The exciting events of 1848 were drawing near while we were absorbed in these studies, and although, at that time, political matters were never mentioned within the school, so many new students poured in that the lecture-room could not contain them. Naturally, too, we were all in a ferment of excited anxiety that needed no explanation. When political demonstrations out of doors began to be nightly occurrences, our Professor, of his own accord, would gather us about him in the road instead of in the class-room. Also, when the public events, well known to us all, culminated in the tragedy of the "bloody 15th of May," De Sanctis's school was

broken up by shot and shell in the open streets, behind walls, and at barricades. On that fatal day Luigi La Vista, the cleverest, best and dearest of our band, the leading spirit for whom all predicted a grand future, was shot down by the Swiss Guard at the age of twenty-two. As Ernesto Masi has rightly said, La Vista's death was the finest work of poetry of De Sanctis's school.

Our master was taken prisoner on the 15th of May, and a pupil captured with him told us how the Professor on the way to gaol persisted in explaining to his Swiss captors the historical significance of the day's revolt, and spoke so warmly of William Tell that for a while the men halted to enjoy his eloquence. Soon, however, they hustled him on to the arsenal, where he was detained with his comrades on board a frigate. Being released after a few days, when reactionary excesses had already begun, he invited a few trusty adherents to his rooms and read them the striking discourse he had composed on the premature end of Luigi La Vista. The portrait of our lost leader was promptly published, with an inscription by De Sanctis that concluded as follows :

Tanta perdita
È maggiore di ogni conforto.
Forse asciugheremo le lagrime
Quando potremo ricordare con gioia
Il giorno infausto della sua morte.

(So great a loss admits of no consolation.
Perhaps our tears may be dried
When we can recall with joy
The ill-omened day of his death.)

This done, De Sanctis sought refuge in the country, but was soon arrested, brought back to Naples, and

confined in the Castel dell' Uovo, where he languished for two years in a cell almost at sea-level, with the beating of the waves continually in his ears. During this time, however, he mastered the German language, and wrote his first play and several lyric poems. At last he was suddenly removed from his dungeon, sent on board a Government vessel, and landed at Malta to go his way into exile.

After two months of severe hardship and poverty he managed to reach Turin, where he entered on the second, and no less fertile, period of his literary career.

The system of criticism then prevailing in Italy was still at the same stage as in the years preceding 1848—that is to say, it was a patriotic system, demanding that poetry, history, science and letters should have a "*civile*," *i.e.*, patriotic, aim. All literature, in fact, was to pave the way for the emancipation of the country. Arnaldo da Brescia had to use the language of an anti-clerical of the present day; Giovanni da Procida that of a disciple of Mazzini, while the histories of Greece and Rome were to afford continual lessons in patriotism, and the footnotes to Greek and Latin classics to supply perpetual allusions to the liberation of Italy, even at the cost of misinterpreting the text. We can all remember the great controversy carried on among us at that date, with such an array of learning and knowledge, touching the history of the Longobards in Italy. There were two different parties, two opposed systems; one upheld by those who desired an Italian Federation with the Pope as its head, the other by those who championed political unity and the abolition of the Papacy's temporal power. In order to realise to what an extent the political idea pervaded and dominated all things, it is enough to recall the famous name of

Vincenzo Gioberti. In fact, this writer devoted his whole life to the construction of a politico-philosophical system that should interpret the universe and its history for the special use and benefit of Italy. Nowadays, even we Italians find it hard to understand why we were seized with so overwhelming an enthusiasm for a book such as "The Primacy of Italy" (*Il Primato*), in which, with perfect good faith, great eloquence and talent, the author demonstrated that in the past, present and future we had always been and should always remain the first nation of the world, with whom no other could ever dare to compete. Of course, this kind of literature had a genuine historical importance, inasmuch as it freed us from Arcadia and from the froth of empty rhetoric by supplying art with a nobler and more exalted aim. All strong and genuine feeling can be a source of eloquence or poesy. In fact, the Giobertian theory did excellent service in preparing the way for the events of 1848, which afforded so many proofs, not only of patriotism, but also of heroic bravery, though not, alas! of an equal amount of good sense. But after 1850 it was no longer necessary to use artificial devices for teaching patriotism to a people who had so eagerly shed their blood in its cause. The main question, rather, at that date, was how best to train the national intelligence and the rising generation to discern the real gist of events, and to make more effectual preparations for the new struggle that was foreseen to be inevitable, although under different conditions from those of the previous attempt. The political freedom established in Piedmont and the tactful sobriety of the Piedmontese people urged all Italy to follow the path thus traced out.

In this state of affairs De Sanctis's critical writings

lent timely help by attacking and demolishing many literary prejudices. An article of his on "The Jew of Verona," by the Jesuit Father Bresciani, was one of his best and most successful efforts. Bresciani's romance had been written for the express purpose of extolling the reactionary party and slandering the Italian Revolution. Those well-known novels "Niccolò dei Lapi," "Ettore Fieramosca," and "L'Assedio di Firenze," had been written in defence of liberal ideas; so why should not "L'Ebreo di Verona" appear in support of the clerical party? The press assailed the unlucky Jesuit with torrents of abuse, accusing him of having insulted his native land, and attacking his political and religious convictions. Nothing that was opposed to the liberty and independence of Italy could have the slightest artistic value.

But when De Sanctis entered the lists he immediately proved the superiority of his critical talent by throwing every literary artifice to the winds. "I can respect your convictions," he said to Bresciani; "I do not dispute your principles, but I deny your ability as a writer. How is it that the same religion we all find so admirable in Manzoni's work only makes us yawn when you speak of it? Because, in your book, it is not seen to be a genuine sentiment and a living faith, but to be solely inspired by party spirit. It is the means to an end that you dare not avow, but that is the evident purpose of your book, in which literary art is only a pretence. And this pretence is fatal to it. What is your real intention? To jeer at the Revolution and cast dirt on it? Well, even this might be done, were you capable of treating the comic side from which even revolutions are not exempt, since they often lapse into follies and crimes which everyone is entitled to blame. One could heap ridi-

cule on the exaggeratedly Roman phraseology of the French Terror, one might laugh at the Puritanic speech of the English Commonwealth. But you try to throw ridicule on the grand and heroic element of our Italian Revolution. This is sheer foolishness. You call the Liberals rascally sectarians, and then tell us that they bravely face death for their country, ready to endure everything, sacrifice everything in their country's cause. And you can laugh at all this and expect us to share your merriment? How is it that you fail to discover or invent a single great character in the ranks of your reactionary party? Why, too, do you shirk telling us what that party has really done? You say that Pius IX. is the saviour of Italian society and of true freedom; but why do you give no description of him at Gaeta, why not depict him in the act of signing his Encyclical, in the act of summoning foreign troops to shoot down his own countrymen? Why shrink from recording an event of which you highly approve? Instead, you show us the Pope leaning over the balcony of the royal palace in Portici to look at the Gulf of Naples, of which you then give us a long and tedious description. You have the courage to write of sunshine and sunsets, moonlight and seascapes, when there was war in Lombardy, war in Venice, war in Rome, and the youth of Italy were shedding their blood for their country? You exalt your own friends, and think your reader jeers at them; but it is not the reader, it is the writer's conscience that flatly contradicts the words he has traced. You would make heroes of your friends, and you see how they come out! You would make mere puppets of the revolutionists, but these puppets come to life in your hands, and gaze at you with eyes that appal you and freeze the mockery on your lips!

"In the same way that you make a pretence of artistic work, so your whole book is mere pretence. For the true spirit of your characters—good and evil alike—invariably escapes you, and remains an unknown quantity. The individual for you is only a peg for some tale, having no spark of life in it; action only a pretext for describing the scene of it. Pius IX. appears on the balcony to give you an excuse for describing the Gulf of Naples; he goes to the Vatican to let you describe his carriage, his dragoons, trumpeters, and attendants. The Pope is put in for the sake of the carriage, the dragoons for their beautiful high boots, the trumpeters for their shining trumpets, the chamberlains for their beautiful embroidered uniforms; yet nothing is beautiful save the adjective itself, which is vainly reiterated a thousand times. The Jesuits expelled from Genoa are huddled in the hold of a ship, and Father Bresciani has the cruelty to leave them groaning there while he describes the topgallant sail, forestay sail, bowsprit, and every other detail of the vessel's gear. You know the bewigged wooden dummies exhibited in barbers' shops? You know the designs tailors show us of the human figure seen full face, in profile, and from the back? The figures are there to show the cut of their clothes, and the dummy heads for the sake of their wigs. So the characters in 'The Jew of Verona' are only introduced to defame the Liberals and serve as pegs for descriptions, and these latter for the display of elegant language, since Father Bresciani also pretends to be a purist. Indeed, he once declared that he was capable of writing in Father Bartoli's style,[1] whereupon Pietro Giordani angrily retorted, 'You insolent

[1] Padre Bartoli was famed in his day for the elegance and purity of his style.

fool, do you imagine that your brains are like his because you both wear the same caps?'" De Sanctis then goes on to say that after all Bresciani was not altogether wrong, since in his book brains were only brought in for the sake of describing the cap that covered them. But after this scathing review no one thought it worth while to cut up Bresciani's novel. It was thoroughly demolished and shared the oblivion allotted to the old school of criticism.

The lectures on the "Divina Commedia" which De Sanctis was then giving also increased his reputation in Turin. The problem he tried to solve was the artistic scheme of this immortal work. The Middle Ages teemed with legends, traditions, and supernatural appearances, in which the prevailing elements were always terrible, fantastic, or demoniacal. One finds in this legendary lore, as in numerous paintings on old cathedral walls, a thousand descriptions of the three realms forming the subject of the "Divina Commedia." Often, too, the punishments of the lost souls, the scenery, the fantastic beings, are identical with those you find in the poem. Whole libraries had been written on this subject: men had tried to discover the history, the secret significance and allegorical meaning of this mass of material. De Sanctis, however, puts aside those antiquarian researches and simply says: "But these materials could not create the 'Divina Commedia'; they were only its antecedents. Otherwise, why should this queer jumble of legends, that, as we know, first originated in Ireland and gradually spread over Germany and Italy, have failed in all those long years to develop into real art and real poetry, before Dante's day? It was because the real dramatic element contained in them had perished at its birth; the figures in those legends neither live

nor move, they are always mere shadows. There is no conflict of character or passion; there are no living men in them, not one being possessed of free will, able to be, to do, and to suffer." Religion carries man beyond humanity, raises him above reality, while history keeps him earth-bound and stained by passions which religion has condemned. So the ideal unity being reft in twain, no poetry can be created. What, then, enabled Dante to take possession of this fantastic world and breathe a new spirit into it? We will put aside his commentators, and, turning to the poem itself, will do our best to understand and enjoy it. Dante has managed to weld together two apparently hostile themes by assuming to be a spectator and playing almost the leading part in their final developments. He, a living mortal, enters the realm of shadows, while retaining all his human and political passions, and thus making even the still vaults of heaven resound with echoes of earthly things. Thus the dramatic element is restored and time reappears in eternity. At the sight of a living mortal, at the sound of his voice, even the dead souls come to life for the moment. They feel the throb of earthly passions, they see again their country and their friends, they ask for news of their nearest and dearest. The finite revives in the bosom of the infinite; nature, history, human personages, human passions, reappear on the supernatural scene. We meet with Guelphs and Ghibellines, Whites and Blacks, the Church and the Empire. The drama of Dante's period is played again in the other world. It is the poem of Italy and of all humanity, it is the "Divina Commedia"!

Dante then introduces Pier delle Vigne. We may leave aside the poet's strongest expressions and antitheses. We may leave aside the historic and

allegorical episodes, together with the theories, both ancient and modern, regarding the sin of suicide. At this moment all those points are only material and useless additions. The poet does not consider suicide in the abstract, but the individual in the act of committing a crime that is perpetually repeated in hell, together with the separation of the sinner's soul from his body, so that the pain and its penalty continue for ever. We tread the tangle of twisted trunks wherein the harpies make their nests. How the fantastic element still prevails in all its mediæval terror! But when Dante in breaking off a twig finds words and blood issuing from the stem, he is moved to pity thereby, and is excused by Virgil; then the scene changes, and the speaking tree is the soul of Pier delle Vigne, who tells his tale. Where is hell now? where the fantastic element? We are transported to Palermo and Naples; we are at the Court of Frederick II., in the presence of the sovereign and his Chancellor. Here we have a drama that lacks no essential part. Here is the Chancellor, Pier delle Vigne, who, ruined by hatred and calumny, is suddenly hurled from the summit of his power, and, overwhelmed with despair, puts an end to his life. He swears that he never broke faith with his lord, who was "so worthy of honour" ("che fu d'onor si degno"—Dante's "Inferno"); and prays that justice may be done on earth to his slandered fame. This is his dearest desire. Thus a real human drama comes before us in the midst of fantastic surroundings, and thus mediæval mysticism fades away at the rise of Italian poetry, the poetry that inaugurates the Renaissance.

At the sound of a Florentine's voice, Farinata degli Uberti haughtily emerges from his yawning tomb, as

though to show his contempt for hell. And when reminded of the banishment of his followers, he exclaims that this hurts him more sorely than the fire that will consume him for all eternity. The entire history of Florence is brought before our eyes. We are no longer in hell; we are in the streets of the turbulent, blood-stained city. We behold the father of Guido Cavalcanti, who, imagining that news has come of his son's death, hastily falls back into his fiery tomb, as though his child were all he cared for on earth.

De Sanctis then goes on to say that he does not care to know the real story of Francesca di Rimini. The immortal Francesca is the one created by Dante. She is the first real woman in mediæval literature, far more real than Beatrice, whose figure is still veiled in clouds of allegory and myth. But Francesca is a fragile, impassioned nature, who falls into sin without being able to fight against it, and who, while conscious of her guilt, cannot see how she could help committing it. Her words are appallingly candid: "He loved me and I loved him." That is all. The storm wind drives her hither and thither, even as her passion had driven her, and always in the arms of her lover. Weeping, she tells the story of her love, and laments that the Ruler of the universe should be adverse to her, but she sees no remedy for this, and makes no complaint. Suddenly, she comes to a pause, cuts short her tale, and, veiled in her mantle of pain, only exclaims, "That day we read no farther" ("Quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante"). The impression we receive is barely hinted at, nay, almost hidden by her words, yet it emerges from these with all the greater force, and stirs the depths of the reader's soul.

Paolo seems to be Francesca's echo; he weeps while she tells her tale. They are damned for ever,

and they love for ever; their passion has brought them to death and eternal punishment. But no one can part them. "What does this mean?" asks De Sanctis. "This joy and sorrow, this obstinacy and penitence?" But all this conjoined is life itself, surprised in all its mystery of contradiction. The poet depicts the enigma, but leaves it unsolved. If we examine one by one the whole series of De Sanctis s "Critical Essays," we shall find the same ruling idea in them all. French critics showed their disapproval of Victor Hugo's "Triboulet" by expounding the nature of true paternal love, and seeking examples of it from Greek authors, from Corneille and Racine, in order to demonstrate the inferiority of the modern poet. De Sanctis, however, proved instead that sentiment is bound to vary according to the diversities of the persons who feel it. Triboulet could not feel in precisely the same manner as the "Horace" of Corneille. In analysing Triboulet's character, he discovered the source of the real merits and defects of Victor Hugo's play. So when the same French writers tried to demolish Alfieri's "Mirra" by employing their former methods, De Sanctis explained the character of the protagonist and the conflict that was the key-note of the piece, thus supplying in a few admirable pages, not only a critical account of the tragedy, but also the most interesting reproduction of it.

II

So great a mass of Italian and foreign literature has been devoted to Giacomo Leopardi and his poems, that it forms a library of much value. But so far as I know no one has depicted the poetic figure of

our great author so successfully as De Sanctis. He shows us the desperate scepticism and sadness of a man whom constant illness had robbed of his youth and reduced to premature decay ; of a man to whom nature seemed a stepmother and the world a band of rascals bent on crushing all who were honest. He describes how the poet seems to sneer at the infinite vanity of all things, because life has no joys for him, can give him no consolation ; because the world is to him an immense and dreary desert, without an oasis, without a flower, without even a blade of grass. Then, however, by a masterly touch, De Sanctis enables us to see that beneath this deadly monotony, this perception of the infinite vanity of all things, there lies a heart that beats strongly, and hopes against hope ; that there is an intellect teeming with great ideas, a creative power producing hosts of gracious images full of life, youth, and beauty, that people the desert as with breathing forms, which vanish all of a sudden like empty dreams, again re-appearing only to fade away ; and from this mental struggle that was the real tragedy of Leopardi's great but tortured mind there issued a vein of deathless song that, while apparently, the poetry of despair, changed in our hearts into a song of hope. For it was the image of buried Italy struggling to rise from the grave.

De Sanctis had a mysterious gift of gleaning inspiration from the sight of a work of art and of discerning, as by instinct, its fundamental idea, of tracing back this idea to its primary elements, of divining how these had germinated and developed in the mind of the poet whose secret he revealed, and then recomposing the whole and bringing it before us in a plainer and more intelligible fashion.

This peculiar gift of his was a real spark of genius, and the very essence, so to say, of his intellect and character. The excessive absent-mindedness that frequently exposed him to ill-natured comment was a natural defect that his mental habits had tended to increase. Well trained to the work of studying pictures, poems, and fictitious personages from the critical and analytic point of view, he sometimes chanced to apply the same method to living persons in the clash and conflict of human passions. Accordingly, in one of these fits of distraction he would be unconsciously occupied in analysing, decomposing, and inwardly re-constructing the characteristics of persons who were talking to him at the time, and who, naturally annoyed to find he was not attending to them, would imagine he did not know what they were saying. Yet, as a matter of fact, it was frequently proved that, in spite of his inattention, he had divined their most hidden thoughts.

Even on this score, De Sanctis has given a true portrait of himself in his "Electioneering Journey" ("Un Viaggio elletorale"). In 1876 he came forward as a candidate for his native borough and obtained at first a majority of seventy-seven votes. Although elected to a seat elsewhere, he preferred to represent his birthplace, and was much grieved to learn that some of the electors were opposed to his nomination. So he went to the town alone, and almost without any announcement of his purpose. For he had conceived the idea of conquering the public by his eloquence, and hoped that his name would serve as a banner for the real good of the country, as a flag of patriotism and honesty, round which all would rally, regardless of party passions. But speedily discovering that he met with no

response, he plunged into a thousand reflections on the oddity of human nature. On looking out of the window, he recognises a landscape described in one of Regaldi's sonnets, recites it from memory, and forthwith proceeds to analyse it. He hears certain subtle and sophistical arguments and pours out a philosophico-critical discourse on the trick of cavilling. He gives a summary of his principal speeches, but halts at every step to criticise his own words. "This idea was over-refined and had not been understood. That retort had no point and missed its mark. Another hit straight, and the theologian opposite me winced as though feeling the blow. At last," he continues, "I succeed in fascinating the audience, I dominate and carry it with me, I see that some people have tears in their eyes. Nevertheless, when my speech was done, my hearers looked as if they wanted to ask, 'Is that all?'" But the strangest thing was that when he retired to bed worn out with fatigue, the persons he had seen during the day appeared before him like ghosts, and skilfully explained the real feelings of the electors, which seemed to have escaped his notice altogether during the day. For he dreamt that the theologian, who was a relation of his own, appeared to him and said: "You come here to compose a romance, but elections are matters of history. It was a queer notion of yours to try to convince people by words. Waste of time! Pay heed to the key of the situation. The electors have to obey their chief. They think that they do as they please, but they dance to the tune of their chief. You won't succeed here, won't get any additional votes." This proved to be the case. In spite of all his efforts and all the eloquent speeches, this electioneering visit only procured him twenty

extra votes, and was, as he perceived, an utter failure. Even in his own native place his opponent gained the victory. Afterwards, when all was over, he learnt that the electoral college of Avellino was in the hands of a local tyrant, nicknamed "His Majesty Don Michele," and that in order to get rid of him the electors finally chose the candidate opposed to De Sanctis. In fact, the latter's preliminary success had only strengthened the tyrant's power and fomented the party passions he wished to appease. The "Electoral Journey" is the most vivid and faithful picture of Avellino and its inhabitants; but is also a proof that the possession of superior talent together with a keenly critical temperament is not enough to ensure success in an electoral campaign.

The critical faculty that was always awake in De Sanctis was a source of weakness as well as strength to him in political life. When it was necessary to analyse the varying conditions of opposed parties in Parliament, he often displayed a force of penetration that excited general admiration. Whenever a new state of things arose either in politics or Parliament, he was the man best able to expound and define it, while on more than one occasion he showed an almost prophetic gift of divining future events. Thereupon his influence would be greatly enhanced, especially as every one knew that he was never led astray by party spirit, and that his words were always inspired by the truest patriotism. At moments such as these he was truly, one may say, the voice of his country and of the national conscience; therefore, he really led the life of a political apostle, exercising both in Parliament and journalism the same beneficent

influence over the people at large that he had formerly wielded over his students as a Professor in Naples. Accordingly, he was repeatedly raised to the highest offices of the State ; returned as deputy at every election, was thrice a cabinet minister, was named Governor of Avellino at a time of special difficulty, and was Vice-President of the House of Deputies. However, when there was no question of foreseeing or explaining events, and no need to do the work of an apostle, he would frequently allow his thoughts to wander and indulge in a critical analysis of men and things, without perceiving that all was changing around him with a bewildering rapidity that allowed no leisure for studying the times. Thus he was frequently busied with seeking the cause and significance of some novel aspect of affairs when that aspect had already merged into a newer one that took him completely by surprise. Hence he was sometimes accused of lacking common sense, of failing to understand the very events he had previously explained with such masterly and acknowledged precision ; whereupon insignificant nobodies would dare to speak of him with pity or even contempt. So his popularity would suddenly be at low ebb, but was soon at high tide again. These fluctuations caused him profound annoyance, because he always knew exactly how matters went, and clearly recognised when and how far his accusers were in the right. He would talk to his friends of all this with childlike directness and almost seemed to take refuge and comfort in the constant affection of his former pupils, who admired and loved him without any flattery. The simple goodness and transparency of his nature was never seen so clearly as in the way in which he accepted reproof as well

as advice from those he thoroughly trusted. This is why we, his old students, adored and revered him most of all in the days when his fame was at zero and the mass of the public seemed hostile or indifferent to him.

Meanwhile, his political life naturally distracted him from his usual studies, though he never forsook them altogether. A new school of criticism was gaining ground, not only abroad but also in Italy, where it found many valiant disciples. Both poetry and art contain a certain element that is neither the work *per se* nor that personal contribution from the artist, which had been so admirably described by De Sanctis, but is derived from the people and the impersonal offspring of the national spirit. Mythology and legendary lore, nursery tales, the songs and speech of the masses, while also works of art and poetical creations, are really a product of the collective being called the people. This is the original artist who creates the poetic material that is seized upon by some individual genius and marked with his personal stamp. And it is only when the work of the people and that of the individual are thoroughly fused and welded together that great masterpieces are born. Neither the "Iliad" nor the "Odyssey" could have been produced had not the great soul of the Grecian people already given birth to language and mythology. Homer is the very spirit of old Greece endued with personality and self-consciousness: the work of the individual poet would be inexplicable apart from the collective work that preceded it. When you open the "Divina Commedia," you read, enjoy and admire it, yet you venture to criticise it. This may well be done if you have the critical power of a De Sanctis, and

when examining the general idea of the poem or its best explained and most glorious episodes. But, as De Sanctis himself has told us, this immortal work contains the whole of the Italian Middle Ages, and shows us the process of its transformation. Accordingly, the legends and traditions, the history, science, and speech of that period were subjected by the historic method to a wonderfully close analysis that has arrived at great and assured results. Should we employ the same method in order to judge the "Divina Commedia?" Did De Sanctis resort to that method? He says plainly: "Undoubtedly, all this is very fine, very useful: but it applies to the antecedents of the 'Divina Commedia,' not to the poem itself, which is my sole concern." This is the really deep difference between De Sanctis and the new school of criticism.

For the latter is not satisfied with ascertaining the essential nature of a work of art in itself, nor how it appeared to the mind that gave it birth; it feels bound to trace the historical process of its formation during the course of ages. It is not enough to know art only in its moments of glory—one must know by what paths it was led to glory. The first attempts of Greeks and Italians to mould their respective languages already contain in germ and *in posse* the subsequent developments of Greek and Italian poetry. Albeit the impersonal achievement of the multitude cannot bear the stamp of individual genius, yet it has a definite value of its own, and being nearer to nature is, on that account, a better subject for historical investigation of a more assured, more scientific, and almost experimental kind. Above all, too, this work of the masses is likewise a work of the human mind, and, therefore, should be

studied by us in that light. Who would or could be content to limit his historical studies to the lives of heroes and men of genius, ignoring the mass of the people, who frequently achieve the greatest of works? How, too, could science be oblivious of the people in days such as these, when the people is about to assume the leading part in modern society? "Do you not see," cry the new critics, "that by means of our method we have managed to renovate and transform the entire history of Italian literature? Fresh researches have been made, an immense store of hitherto unknown material has been collected; whole periods of literature, hitherto left obscure, have revealed their real features under the rays of our search-light. De Sanctis obtained no results such as these, nor was it possible for him to obtain them by his personal, intuitive method. For his method is not only incomplete, but leads students astray. We of the new school set the student to seek, discover, and to prove his discoveries; whereas De Sanctis tells him to contemplate and guess at hazard."

It is quite useless—as attempted by some—to quote the numerous passages from his works in which he acknowledges the merit and future value of the new school; he certainly recommends the investigation of facts and declares that no history of Italian literature can be written without previously undertaking a series of scientific monographs, such as are indispensably required to place history on a new basis. All these remarks may furnish proofs of his talent, but cannot prove the efficacy of the method he employed. The new criticism does not consist in saying what should be done, but in actually doing it, and De Sanctis never did it. One may search through all his essays, through the whole

of his "History of Literature," without finding a trace of any study of original documents, or of any collation or revision of old texts.[1] Indeed, he had neither time nor inclination to acquaint himself with the chief results obtained by our most industrious writers, and very often his own best works were composed without any knowledge of what others had written. Hence it will be seen that his method was clearly opposed to ours; therefore, one or the other must be wrong.

The consequences of his method are very plainly apparent in the "History of Literature" that he wrote, without consulting or taking into account the very monographs he had so warmly recommended as the indispensable basis of every work on literary history. All are agreed that this book is rather an excellent set of critical essays than a real history. It begins with Ciullo d'Alcamo and the Hohenstaufen Emperor, Frederick II., without any preliminary examination of the enormous mass of works upon the origin of our literature, which almost fill a library. He says nothing of the formation of the language; nothing of the numerous writers of the early Middle Ages, and entirely ignores various classes of literature. Then, on coming to the fifteenth century, he mentions Poliziano, Pulci, and Lorenzo dei Medici, but speaks chiefly of their Italian works. Concerning the men of learning whose Latin works—save for a few brilliant exceptions—contained nothing of lofty æsthetic value, but who nevertheless transformed mediæval ideas into modern thought, he says merely a word or so, thus skipping a whole period of

[1] In one essay only, if my memory is correct, De Sanctis gives a quotation from an already known MS.

literature. Also, he starts his volume on Petrarch, by announcing that he only writes of him as the immortal author of the "Canzoniere." In his opinion, Petrarch the man of learning, who initiated the great literary movement of the fifteenth century, was so thoroughly dead and buried that there was no need to mention him at all. Nor was this view the effect of a passing mood—it was rather an inevitable consequence of the method he pursued. De Sanctis falls silent unless he has to write of some masterpiece and its creator. When forced to enlarge on the general character of this or that age, he either lapses into a string of abstract, monotonous Hegelianisms, or makes the merits of two or three great writers serve to explain the whole period in question, and, thereupon, instantly resumes his wonted originality and vigour of style.

Should you desire a proof of this, I would ask you to read certain parts of his "History of Literature" or a few of the essays in which he appears to sum up so admirably the character of a literary or historical period. Take his celebrated essay, "L'uomo del Guicciardini" (Man according to Guicciardini). This man, as described with such vivid force by De Sanctis, is wise, moderate, intelligent, prudent, and learned, but utterly selfish, without religion, without faith, and solely devoted to his own interests. He is the key to the whole of Guicciardini's philosophy, is the typical representative of the "Cinquecento," and explains the intellectual superiority, the moral and political weakness, of the Italian Renaissance. Nothing could be truer, plainer, or more eloquently described. But this man was no fictitious character of Guicciardini's invention, for instead of creating him, the historian found him ready-made in his own

conscience and in that of his age. How had such a type been evolved? What were the conditions, what the historical necessities that had brought him into the world? How was it that enduring party strife, long wars between the Church and the Empire, the destruction of old institutions, the transformation of literature and of all art and science, should have deprived man of faith, religion, and self-denial and converted him into a thoroughgoing egotist? De Sanctis paid no heed to this problem, but we are bound to study it. His criticism stops where the personal element ends, and if he endeavours to go farther his originality disappears. With Guicciardini and three or four other writers and their works he undertakes an explanation of the age that gave them birth. And he does all this on his own peculiar and intuitive method, when a scientific, experimental, and assured method has been already discovered. Such, in short, are the charges brought by some writers of to-day against the works of De Sanctis.

That the new school of criticism has rendered great service to science is too obvious a fact to be disputed. Nevertheless, the new school should be prompt to acknowledge that its method can neither solve nor even be applied to the questions with which De Sanctis was mainly concerned. It is a mistake to say that if one method is right the other must be wrong. One should rather say that each method serves to complete the other. Let us take Boccaccio's "Decameron," for instance. The new criticism gives us the history of the precursors of that work, reduces every tale to its primary elements, and traces its historical origin in all earlier literatures, and occasionally even in those of the East. By pursuing this process in a strictly methodical way it contrives to

discover and learn what parts of the "Decameron" were already known to the world before Boccaccio breathed life into it. But if one would learn how this event happened—*i.e.*, in what way the identical personages who had previously remained vague, abstract, nebulous forms could have acquired the poetic realism that gave them immortality in the world of art—then the historical method no longer serves to guide us and we must take another road, the very road followed by De Sanctis.

I will add a still plainer instance. Many books have now been written on our poems of chivalry. We now possess a complete history of all the personages in the poems of Ariosto, Pulci, and Boiardo, and are able to trace them back through the centuries, through the literatures of all countries. Professor Rajna, the author of that history, has devoted all his great talent, enormous learning, and incredible perseverance to the task of gathering and expounding all these materials. He has likewise discovered the two popular or semi-popular poems (if the term may be allowed) that Pulci tacked together as the basis of his "Morgante Maggiore," which has been proved to be, for the most part, a decided bit of patchwork. Thus we now know for certain which were the few characters and scenes of Pulci's own invention and what changes he made in the characters he had taken from earlier sources, which were the verses he had stolen almost *en bloc*, which he had altered, and exactly to what extent. All this is the result of scientific investigation that, being pursued on a strict method, arrives at positive conclusions which De Sanctis could not possibly grasp. Pulci's compound (*rifacimento*) has given lasting fame to two poems otherwise condemned to

oblivion. The small additions he introduced were exactly what invested the personages described with the æsthetic quality that insures them immortality. But what is this vivifying note, and where can we put our finger on it in Pulci's *small* additions? This is the problem the scientific, historical method fails to solve, but which can be solved by that De Sanctis employed with such incomparable success—the method to which, even at this day, the new criticism is forced to recur for the completion of its own researches. A touch of inspiration, let us say, is required for such work, and this cannot be taught, like the scientific method, neither can it be transmitted, as this may be, to the student's mind. For it is mainly the result of the critic's individual power of artistic intuition, since it will never be easy to find a method for proving and measuring the quality of æsthetic charm.

There cannot be any doubt that had De Sanctis lived long enough to fuse both systems together—as our best critics now seek to do—his work would have been more complete. But I have met with no author, either in Italian or foreign literature, who can surpass him in his own particular line. For in that line he showed marked originality. The same opinion has been expressed by some of the most famous disciples of the new criticism, including Zumbini and D'Ovidio.

In order to grasp the extent of De Sanctis's merit and pass judgment on his work, one must place him between the old school and the new and compare him with both. I will select the weightiest member of the old school, the man for whom I feel the reverence of a disciple and the love of a son. Then I will place De Sanctis's "History of Literature" beside that of Settembrini. The latter, in spite of its numerous defects, in spite of the—often deserved—censure

heaped upon it, will always be a work of great value. It was the last battle fought by the grand old conspirator for the good of his country. In his opinion the sole aim of literature should be to mould the national spirit and promote its advance towards liberty and goodness—which seemed one and the same thing to the high-souled Settembrini—and towards freedom from clerical oppression, from native and foreign tyrants. For him all great writers were bound to be Ghibellines; no Guelphs or Neo-Guelphs could be great writers. This conviction was so tenacious and deeply-rooted in him that, like every true passion, it became a source of eloquence, but he often sees events through coloured glasses, and therefore takes a false view of them. Settembrini had literary taste; he was accurate, lucid, and conscientious; he admired the classics of Italy, Greece, and Rome, and was well versed in them all. But he had no pronounced talent for philosophy, no great store of learning, no decided critical power. However, his writings were so strongly imbued with his own heroic spirit that some of the pages he has bequeathed us will live for ever. They are all the more admirable because their writer's style, diction, fluency, and force are directly inspired by the earnestness and nobility of his nature. Consequently we cannot separate our admiration for the man of letters from our enthusiasm for the dauntless patriot. This prisoner of State, who during his prolonged confinement would often lay aside his translation of Lucian—the only interest and comfort he had—to make little toys for his children, and endured weeks of anxiety about some doves he hoped to have sent to them; who went cap in hand among the most desperate criminals in the jail to ask them to give their mites in aid of the

victims of an earthquake, and then wrote to his brother, saying: "I feel quite happy to-day, because I have managed to make these wretches feel the joy of being good and pitiful at least for one moment" —this was the same Settembrini who had publicly defied his tyrants and faced death like a lion. Therefore, whenever his feelings were stirred, his style and power of expression surpassed all the greatest examples in modern Italian literature.[1]

The following particulars, however, have not been given elsewhere. One day in a Neapolitan street he saw a poor widow with four little children waiting at the entrance of the Ministry of Police in order to hand a petition to the chief, Del Carretto, in person. At that moment the Minister drove up to the door in his carriage with his usual fiery horses and insolent coachman, and on hearing the supplicant's prayer, ordered his grooms to beat her off like a dog. At the sight of the terrified creature flying in despair with her babes, Settembrini said to himself, "Poor woman! you shall be revenged." So he hurried home and wrote his famous "Protest of the People of the Two Sicilies," the cry of outraged honesty that became the cry of the whole nation, that revealed to Italy the presence of a great new writer, started a new style of political literature, and was the first step made by Southern Italians towards uniting with their brothers of the North and finally winning possession of their joint fatherland. Even his "Literary History" is inspired by these patriotic aspirations, which render it a great work in spite of numerous defects. In reading it we eagerly follow the author's steps, noting his gladness on reaching the end of his long pilgrimage,

[1] For further details of his eloquence *vide* the essay on Luigi Settembrini.—Translator's note.

seeing that the labours of our poets and prose-writers tend to keep before his eyes the glorious and immortal vision of his beloved Italy as a free, united, great, and virtuous land. So when critics tell him that nowadays Italian poetry is dead and gone, he indignantly exclaims: "What! How can poetry be dead in Italy? Where could you find a grander, more exquisite poem than our own Revolution? Do you not see the beauty of our heroes, who are certainly grander than Homer's?" And he says this without being aware that he himself is one of those heroes, with such simple and unaffected earnestness that one feels disposed to kneel down and adore this patriot, who seems crowned with a halo of sanctity. His figure appears almost heaven-high above us, yet at the same time quite close to our hearts, as if part of ourselves. For his heroic grandeur is born of the irresistible yearning for goodness, the germ of which exists in the hearts of us all.

But apart from this, when we come to compare Settembrini's critical work with that of De Sanctis, what a difference we find! Settembrini shows us the history of literature in the light of his own lofty spirit and tinged with the political convictions which he brings in at all points. De Sanctis, on the contrary, shows us the history of literature through the minds of the writers who gave it being. So while the latter gives us things as they really were, the former shows them as they appeared to his own mind. So we get critical history from the one, truly subjective criticism from the other.

Those who attack De Sanctis in the name of the new school, and think they view the world from a higher plane because they have mounted on his shoulders, fail to see that they are stabbing their own

progenitor. If De Sanctis had not already cleared the ground of innumerable rhetorical and patriotic misconceptions, of innumerable empty formulas and rules, scientific criticism could not have made such enormous progress among us. The independence of art had first to be proclaimed, the history and laws of the human mind had first to be discovered in the personal work of men of genius before it could be possible, by means of a sure method, to discover the same laws in the impersonal work of the masses. This task had been already performed in Germany, where the new criticism first came into being. Accordingly, in examining all that De Sanctis has done, were we to try to consider his work apart from and independently of all that has been done since his day, which, nevertheless, was prepared and helped forward by him, we should be forgetting what would happen if the strictly scientific method were to be invariably excluded from employing the literary and æsthetic investigations in which he excelled. For if these were not employed as the natural adjuncts of the new criticism, this could merely give us the skeleton of a work of art without the living spark that forms its very essence. Thus the chief end and object of all literary research would be entirely missed.

De Sanctis was a true awakener and deliverer of the national spirit, a vigorous apostle of political liberty and free thought, which were one and the same thing in his eyes. This was his real mission and constitutes his historical value. But the chief means that enabled him to reach his chosen aim was the genuine critical power that assures him so lofty a niche in the history of Italian literature.

DOMENICO MORELLI

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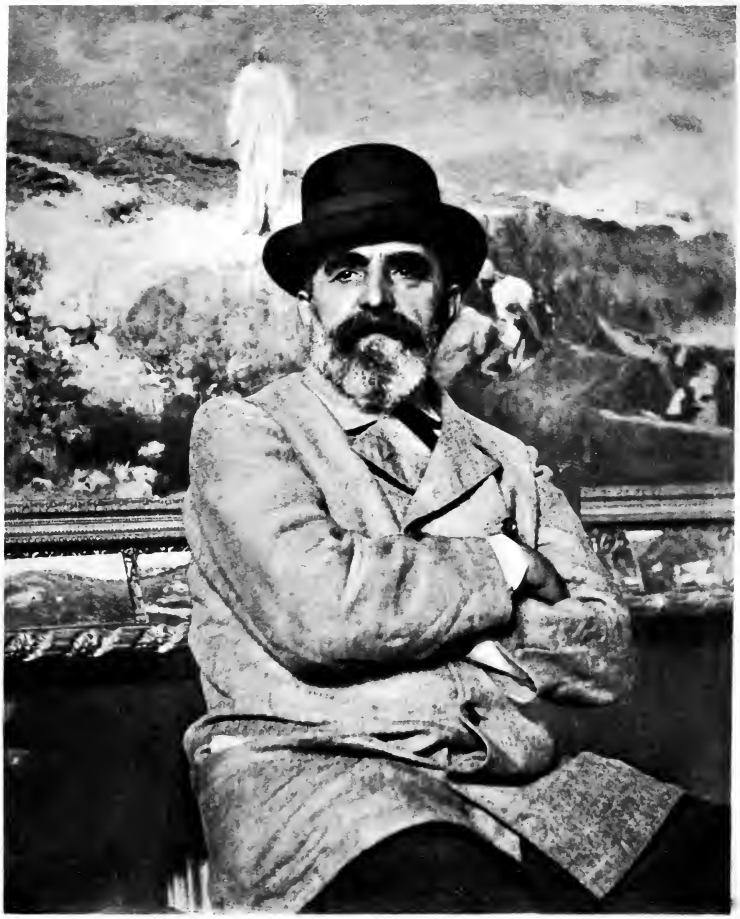

Domenico Morelli.

DOMENICO MORELLI

I

When first invited to give a commemorative discourse on our great fellow-townsman, Domenico Morelli, I shrank from the idea of speaking in public of the lamented brother-in-law who was also my dearest and most intimate friend. All the more, too, that owing to the closeness of our intercourse in early youth, it was impossible to describe Morelli's life without frequent allusions to myself and family affairs, which might prove no less unwelcome to my hearers than embarrassing to me. But just at that time I chanced to halt in Verona for a few hours, and took the opportunity of revisiting the church of San Zeno, which I had seen, years before, in the company of Morelli, who enthusiastically admired that venerable building. In crossing the beautiful Piazza my thoughts turned to my lost friend, and then I had a strange experience. For, as I entered the church, I seemed to see Morelli's luminous dark eyes, sparkling as of old with life and vigour, seemed to hear him speaking in the animated tone I had known so well, and—suddenly remembered that during one of the last talks I had with him, shortly before his death, he had clearly expressed a wish that I should speak or write something about him, *later on*. That decided the question.

I promised to give the requested address, and have come before you to fulfil my pledge to the best of my poor ability.

First of all, however, I must ask you to remember the enormous difficulty of attempting to analyse the genius of any great artist and adequately describe it in words. In Italian and foreign literature we find many splendid pages on the genius of Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, and of many other great writers, but very few pages giving any satisfactory account of the exact nature, let us say, of Raphael's, Michel Angelo's, or Lionardo's special gifts. Also the critic's difficulties are increased a thousandfold when—as in my case—he is no artist and has no practical knowledge of the technique of colour and design. Yet none can deny that painting, being one of the higher forms of art, is a direct creation of the human mind, and, being also a form of poetry, its history is unavoidably and closely linked with the history of literature. The true artist has to think, feel, and suffer much before his feelings and ideas can be rendered by his brush or by the pigments on his palette. Accordingly, an examination of Morelli's intellect and temperament, and of the various modes in which they influenced his work, may throw some light on his art and on all the different phases it went through before assuming its final and most original shape, and thus enable us to estimate his genius at its fullest value.

Morelli was born in Naples on the 8th of July, 1823, but I first made his acquaintance in 1840, when he was a youth of seventeen and I was a schoolboy of thirteen years of age. At that date he was still living with his mother, a poor hardworking woman, in the St. Lucia quarter of Naples, who intended him to be an ironsmith. For his better success in that

craft some one had advised him to attend the School of Design for working men at the Academy of Fine Arts. But from the moment he touched a pencil he could not throw it aside, and renounced all idea of plying the hammer and anvil. Everything connected with the new art he was learning had an irresistible attraction for him. As he frequently repeated, the very smell of oil-paint was intoxicating. Unluckily, the joy of learning to draw could not supply the place of food, and accordingly his mother and he went dinnerless sometimes. Happily an anonymous friend now volunteered to give the lad a trifling allowance through the agency of one of my uncles, who used to add something more from his own purse. So Morelli used to come to our house, and as soon as I saw him we became friends. My sympathy and liking had been already aroused by hearing of the hardships of his life and his burning enthusiasm for art. We had endless talks together in my little study, and during long rambles to Mergellina, Gaiola, and Posillipo to revel in sunset effects, sea-views, and moonlight. So we often returned very late and still talking incessantly. My mother often said to us: "I'd give anything to know what you talk about, where you find subjects for such torrents of words. Surely your jaws will soon crack, worn out by your chatter!" No wonder she could not conceive what we two lads had in common. We belonged to different classes of society, pursued different studies, and our mental faculties were of a totally different kind. Even in those early days I had the critical, analytical, and investigating spirit, whereas Morelli had an impulsive, spontaneous nature, a fanciful and creative imagination. But it was precisely this diversity of mind that chiefly drew us together. Morelli could

not follow any course of reasoning for long; it wearied him so much that he soon slipped away from it, and lost his way, as it were. Even if by force of argument one managed to fix his attention on a point, he would first go into an ecstasy over it, and then, suddenly, the logical sequence of what had been dinned in his ears would be transformed by his fancy into a series of splendid images. This process always had the most fascinating effect upon me. If I sometimes set to work to analyse and pick to pieces his fancies, he would seem quite delighted, as though he had discovered a reasonable basis for his most daring flights of imagination.

All this combined to give so truly original a stamp to his talk as to make it incredibly attractive to all his hearers. It was like watching a marvellous succession of living pictures. I will quote one or two examples, although the peculiar humour of the Neapolitan dialect he spoke is ill suited to the present sad occasion. But our purpose is to study the true nature of his talent, and this is admirably mirrored in the language he employed.

Morelli had a special antipathy for lawyers, and invariably called them *paglietti*,[1] *i.e.*, pettifoggers. There were two reasons for this: First of all, he considered the legal profession extremely prosaic. And to be prosaic was, in his eyes, almost a crime. Secondly, because he thought a lawyer was bound to defend every case, whether good or bad, honest or dishonest. But he was neither able nor willing to express his idea in any abstract form. One day I chanced to inquire about a young kinsman of mine who had just started as a criminal lawyer. His answer

[1] Literally "wearers of straw hats," but used as a term of contempt.

was prompt. "You want to know what *he* is doing? Why, he's waiting for some man to stick a knife into another so that *he* may earn a hundred francs." "Why exaggerate in that way?" I retorted. "Do I exaggerate? Why, the other day, in Via Toledo, I met our friend Don Luigi, who said to me, 'I have just been in court defending a man who had committed a murder in cold blood. There were no extenuating circumstances; perpetual imprisonment would have been too slight a punishment for the wretch; he deserved hanging. Yet I have managed to obtain his acquittal. Such are the joys of our profession! You won't get as much from your painting, Don Domenico!'"

Morelli often produced anecdotes of this sort on the spur of the moment, scarcely aware that they were fictitious, and chiefly because he always expressed his ideas in that form. It would have been useless to ask him whether his anecdotes were founded on fact or inventions of his own, since the incidents and personages he described were quite as real to him—if not more so—than his actual experiences.

Once, on coming back from an excursion to a rather uncivilised district, he wished to give me a notion of the disorder prevailing there. So he immediately produced an appropriate incident. While walking one day with a friend, so he said, they saw the porter of a lordly castle seated at the gate, holding a double-barrelled gun on his knees. "What a fine gun you've got there," remarked my friend. "Yes," replied the porter, touching one of the muzzles with his forefinger, "the other day this barrel killed a Christian." "And you talk of it like that? Do you think so little of murdering a man?" "How could I help it? My master had said to me, 'Giovanni, do me the favour

of shooting that fellow.' How was I to say to my master, 'No, I won't do you that favour'? You see how it was!"

Morelli's way of thinking and expressing his thoughts almost made one believe that his mind must be a sort of crucible, always kept at boiling-point by the perpetual flame of his lively imagination, so that all that went into it became fused and volatilised into a luminous stream of poetic imagery.

II

Before long, however, this lively, impetuous young artist began to feel mentally oppressed and confined within the walls of the Art Academy. For the leading school of design in it was that which had flourished in France under David, during the First Empire, but was subsequently replaced there by more advanced methods. But in Italy the old method still prevailed, and, in a far more exaggerated and pedantic form, still flourished under Minari in Rome, and under Costanzo Angelini at Naples. This school had reduced all artistic work to a species of artistic rhetoric, little different in its kind from the rhetoric that was still employed in our literary academies. Painting was to be learnt from Greek and Roman statuary; line was the one important thing; *chiaroscuro* and colour were only secondary details; while drawing from life was almost unknown. It is enough to recall the species of triangle that was called an eye in profile, and compare it with a living eye, to perceive the futility of that method. As Morelli put it at a later day: "How can you think it possible to paint

rocks and sand, sea and sky, in outline?" [1] Yet such were the prevailing ideas in the Academy school of art at the time, and that also prevailed in the *ateliers* of successful painters, with the public at large, and with the royal personages who patronised art. So, how could one discard them? In fact, Morelli's first picture clearly showed the effects of obeying those rules. The subject of the work was "David soothing the wrath of Saul by playing the harp to him." The two figures seem to be of cardboard—they hover in space, there is no atmosphere about them. David resembles a wooden doll, the seated figure of Saul is quite flat, and the monarch is draped in a classical toga that leaves one arm and part of the chest uncovered. "Tell me," I asked Morelli, "why that arm and chest are left bare?" "Because it is necessary to show that one can paint the nude, otherwise the Academy wouldn't pass the composition."

In another early attempt: "Elijah, transported to heaven, bequeaths his mantle to Elisha," there is a little more movement. But we were still struggling in the bonds of conventionalism. It was in intellectual surroundings such as these, where the moral atmosphere was equally oppressive, that the youth destined to become a painter of such ideal and purely Christian tendencies was condemned to exist for some time. Save for honourable exceptions in the case of a few individuals who, like Morelli, had a true vocation for art, his fellow-students at the Academy mostly consisted of idle lads, who had failed at other schools and wanted to make their parents believe that they were attending the classes and working hard. Their

[1] *Vide* "Recollections of the Neapolitan School of Painting after 1840," by Filippo Palizzi. Naples: A. Tessitore & Son, 1901.

conversation was so coarse, their conduct so incorrect, both as to manners and morals, that I was sometimes obliged to tell Morelli that I could not associate with them.

When one thinks of all this and remembers that Morelli had received no literary training, save what little could be acquired in those days at an inferior elementary school, it seems miraculous that he ever became so great and famous a painter, and able to exercise so preponderating an influence on modern Italian art. Besides, intellectually, at least, all the schools at Naples followed the same method. In fact, the school of literature that I attended was not very dissimilar from the Academy school of art. We had to collect phrases from various writers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and fit them into our own compositions. We had also to make lists of Frenchified words and errors of diction which were to be avoided. I remember having spent several months in making summaries of the diffuse and wearisome grammars of Corticelli and Buommattei. Accordingly, as the difference of our studies prevented Morelli and myself from employing the conventional jargon learnt at school, it followed that in all our private talks we spoke frankly and naturally of what we really felt and really thought. And as it was only on such occasions that our minds seemed to work freely and effectively, so each of us became more and more indispensable to the other's intellectual development.

Meanwhile Morelli was studying certain cantos of Dante with delight, had read Manzoni's "Promessi Sposi," some of Scott's novels, and was devoted to the operatic works of our best Italian composers. But what he enjoyed most of all was a volume of

Byron—translated, I think, by De Virgilli—containing "The Corsair," "Lara," and some of the minor poems. These novel pleasures transported him into a very different world from that of the Academy, and made him rebellious to academical rules. He gave the first sign of revolt against those rules in a painting entitled "The Corsair's Farewell Kiss." Every one can guess what sort of composition it was, being drawn according to rule, feeble in colour, representing a corsair attired in a Greek kilt and a Turkish fez in the act of kissing a woman in Eastern dress. It was neither academic nor romantic. Besides, under the Bourbon rule, the mere fact of painting a corsair with a woman in his arms was a scandal in itself! Consequently it was rejected by the exhibition to which it was sent, and Morelli felt deeply humiliated.

No one could sympathise with him so thoroughly as I, for about the same time I was in much the same predicament. Having been trained in a school of literature that was no less pedantic than Morelli's Academy School, I too attempted rebellion. Regardless of rhetoric, and forgetful of the Trecento phrases I had culled, I set to work one day to write an account of a real incident in which I had had a share. I have entirely forgotten what it was about, but am sure my composition was rubbish. However, I was invited to read it aloud at a public meeting, and it was publicly condemned as a failure. I was severely reproved, treated as a deserter from good principles, openly scoffed at and humiliated. All this was a terrible blow to me at the time, but was really a blessing in disguise, for it decided me to desert that antiquated school and go instead to that of De Sanctis, where I was not only the pupil of an eloquent professor, who was a most accomplished critic, but also

found fellow-students such as La Vista, De Meis, Marvasi, and Menechini, together with many other earnest and intelligent youths. We discussed Goethe and Schiller, Shakespeare and Milton, Victor Hugo and Lamartine, patriotism and freedom—all subjects hitherto forbidden to me. La Vista used to read us the speeches of Thiers and Guizot in the *Débats*, and became so wrought up by them that we already regarded him as a martyr to the revolution that was rapidly approaching, and in which, alas! he was doomed to die the death of a martyr.

III

Meanwhile, what was Morelli to do? There was no De Sanctis school of painting. He was surrounded by Academicians who blamed him, one and all. Inferior men, such as Altamura, were considered much superior to him. Worst of all, the uncertainty of his technique, at that period, seemed to justify to some extent the harsh criticisms hurled at him. Yet, already there was some quality in Morelli's works that gave a hint of future excellence. This quality was more particularly noticeable in his sketches. For, in executing these, it was impossible to confine himself to simple outline, since *chiaroscuro* and sense of colour were absolutely required. So his gift of colour came into play with almost excessive force. It was Nature's great gift to him. Although the Academy was impotent to supply that sense, it was equally unable to crush it.

In his sketches Morelli felt at liberty to take his own course, and accordingly worked on them with increasing

zeal and delight. They brought him no profit, won no prizes, were never submitted to the verdict of his chiefs. He painted them solely for his own pleasure. It was curiously interesting to hear him explain the numerous ideas he had tried to work into them: almost every stroke of his brush was intended to express some shade of thought. The first of his sketches I remember to have seen showed a Franciscan hermit rowing across a river, carrying a dead woman to a burial-ground on the opposite bank. Morelli spoke of this friar as though he were a personal friend, and told me he had been passionately devoted to that very woman; but the relations would not allow her to marry him and forced her to accept a richer man, whereupon he had become a monk, while she slowly wasted away: and, as it happened, was to be buried in the very graveyard of which her inconsolable lover chanced to be the custodian. So Morelli had given the friar a black beard in order to emphasise the pallor of his sorrowful countenance!

Certainly there was something in these sketches that appealed to the spectator's mind and heart. But they were not finished pictures: accordingly Morelli was nicknamed "the sketcher," as if to suggest that he was incapable of executing real paintings.

In fact, in order to succeed in producing finished compositions representing the human figure on a large scale, together with the natural expression of human emotions, it was necessary to cast off the academic shackles and resolutely adopt a new course. The question was, How could he do it, to whom should he apply for help and guidance? The whole history of painting serves to prove that in order to shake off conventionality—always the deadly foe of art—the only way of escape has been to recur to reality and to

nature, which neither deceives nor betrays, nor is ever conventional.

But this maxim, however easy to express, is very hard to carry out. The artist must first learn to interpret nature, and after discovering its essence, must thoroughly assimilate, and then reproduce it on canvas as a creation of his own intelligence: and this result is only to be obtained after all technical difficulties are vanquished; but as such victory cannot be won by inspiration alone, an arduous apprenticeship is required. Morelli's previous training had led him far astray from truth and nature, and all his environment tended to keep him in the wrong path. Academic conventionality was in the very air he breathed.

Luckily, however, a band of Neapolitan painters had just then collected together at Chiaia, Mergellina and farther out, towards Posillipo, in the quarters most frequented by foreigners. Few of the band had studied art at the Academy, which sniffed at their work and nicknamed them "View-makers (*vedutisti*) of the Posillipo Sect." These young men produced water-colour drawings and oil-paintings of the finest land and sea subjects about Naples, Pozzuoli and Sorrento, together with scenes of popular life for the benefit of visitors. Not being disciples of High Art, it was quite natural for them to settle down to work in the country and be content to study from life. Had their landscapes been treated in the conventional style, certainly no foreigners would have cared to buy them. Now and then some one or other of the members had the good luck to be carried off by a wealthy Englishman to the East or elsewhere to execute other commissions, thus gleaning fresh ideas and fresh knowledge. Now and then some foreign painter would join the band in order to do the same kind of

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work, or, one might almost say, to pursue the same trade. Of course, such recruits had been differently trained, worked in a different way, and accordingly enlarged the ideas of our untravelled Neapolitans. I remember that there was a Dutchman who used to paint church interiors with exquisite delicacy and precision. Then there was a Neapolitan member, Filippo Palizzi, who was a real genius. He was professedly a landscape painter, but he generally painted animals, and even had commissions from Englishmen for portraits of pet dogs and horses. He spent his summers at Cava dei Tirreni, always painting from life *en plein air* with extraordinary intelligence and success. As will be presently seen, Palizzi was destined to have a great influence upon Morelli. When the latter first saw and admired him, he felt a sudden impulse towards reality, but it was only at a later period that he was able to apply it with success to his own work. The moment had not yet arrived when the examination of an animal's head by Palizzi's hand sufficed to make him adopt an entirely new technique. Yet even in those early days Palizzi's example urged him, as I have said, towards the study of nature.

The first sign of this new attitude was observable in a picture he produced shortly afterwards, "The Angel guiding dead souls to Charon's barque"—a subject derived from Canto II. of Dante's "Purgatorio." "In Dante's vision," wrote Morelli, "the scene occurred at daybreak, so, in order to study the orange glow of a beautiful dawn and the shimmer on the water, two dear friends and I spent the night in the open air."[1] This clearly shows that he was beginning to despise academic conventions. Many years have passed since I saw that picture, but I re-

[1] "Recollections," &c.

member that there was a male figure standing up in the boat, throwing back with both hands the cloth that had covered his head and eyes while asleep, in order to watch the sunrise. Even this figure was not in the least academic. Morelli told me at the time that it had been suggested to him by one of Flaxman's designs. He had painted the picture for an academic competition, where it won a prize that was afterwards doubled because the canvas was double the size of the dimensions proposed. Thanks to this triumph, and by dint of strict economy, Morelli was enabled to pass a whole month in Rome, which was naturally an important event in his artistic career.

IV

He was deeply impressed by the scenery of the Roman Campagna, by the number of grand, ancient monuments, by the Roman churches and galleries, and even by the modern painters in Rome. One of these, named Coghetti, excited his admiration because his work resembled Domenichino's, but Overbeck was the artist Morelli admired most of all, on account of the novelty of his method. Yet Overbeck was merely an imitator of the Italian masters of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, whose mannerisms he adopted in every detail, so his work was certainly far removed from that direct study of reality and nature towards which Morelli was beginning to feel his way. But Overbeck's attempt to attain—if only by imitation—to the faithful expression of Christian fervour corresponded with another need of Morelli's mind, and with another side of that which was destined to become his special form of art. Therefore, although in

Overbeck's work—as in that of the Florentine and Umbrian schools—design was the principal feature, while Morelli was a born colourist, nevertheless the latter returned to Naples an enthusiastic devotee of the Quattrocentisti, and was seized at once with the wildest admiration for Zingaro's paintings in the cloister of San Severino.

But just then an event occurred that was destined to have a far greater influence on his character and his career than might be supposed by art critics. The two beings I most dearly loved and admired in this world were my sister Virginia and Morelli. Naturally, I often talked to each of the two about the other. The consequence was that they fell in love, which was a great joy to me, since it seemed to assure the future happiness of both, and, accordingly, the fulfilment of my dearest desire. But my family was bitterly opposed to the match. In those days many Neapolitans, and particularly those of the legal profession, to which most of my relations belonged, looked upon artists as a set of extravagant, crazy, ragged paupers.

Besides, few persons in those days foresaw Morelli's future fame. I foresaw it, of course, but my opinion went for little. So my friend was accused of base ingratitude, of audacious presumption, and I was treated almost like a criminal. One evening Morelli came to me and asked what I thought he ought to do. "Go off to Rome at once," I replied, "paint a picture that will show what you are worth, and then bring it to Naples." He followed my advice.

In Rome he worked incessantly, suffered poverty and hunger, but completed a picture that he had already sketched out before leaving Naples. The theme of it was inspired by his present anxieties

and by a hope of future joy. It represented a kneeling Madonna with the sleeping Babe in her arms in the act of singing a lullaby, while a group of attendant angels accompany her song on psaltery, harp, and lute. As soon as this new work was exhibited in Naples, Morelli's reputation was made, and no one felt any more doubt as to his success. For my part I wrote an essay on the picture. It was a very poor, rather inflated, and almost childish composition, but it was the first thing of mine that was printed. I remember what anxiety it cost me; for, having no money, I could not publish it at my own expense, and no editor would have accepted the MS. of an entirely unknown writer. But young La Vista, who saw how things stood, asked me to let him look at my paper, and presently returned it with a packet of proof-sheets. He had caused it to be printed at his own expense with the first money he had earned at the time. So I had the pleasure of making the uncontradicted announcement that Naples was giving Italy a great painter. Nevertheless, my family's opposition to the projected marriage still remained unaltered.

Meanwhile the public events of 1848 had already begun and presently came to a head in Naples with the fierce conflict of May 15th, in which many pupils of De Sanctis took part, and the most gifted and patriotic of them all lost his life. The previous evening Morelli and I were walking about the streets and passed Sant' Anna dei Lombardi, close to the palace where the Parliament was sitting. We noticed that the populace seemed very excited, but went home without the slightest idea that we were on the eve of a revolution. The next morning at seven o'clock Morelli came to tell me that barricades had been

erected in the night. Probably this had been done at the instigation of police agents, who, finding the people unprepared, wished to provoke them to fight. Hastening to Via Toledo, we saw at once the futility of the attempt, and that the crowd had no leaders. A few men had seized the quarters of the National Guard, but abandoned the position later on. Some of the mob ran here and there in search of arms. Presently the red flag was hoisted on the forts, and Sant' Elmo fired off a few shells. Later on came the news that fighting was going on at San Ferdinando, and groups of young men raced through the streets summoning the people to join them. Then we, too, made our way to the houses where armed men were already posted at the windows. Morelli and I became separated in the confusion, so we helped to defend different buildings near the church of San Giacomo. Accordingly several weeks passed before I learnt what had happened to him. As the Bourbon troops used cannon as well as volleys of musketry against every dwelling where resistance was offered, all the inmates tried to escape by ropes from the back windows. Those who were left behind were made prisoners, some wounded, some killed, while others were sent on board the frigates at the arsenal and detained several weeks before being released. Poor La Vista was captured and shot down in the Carità Square. Morelli was caught elsewhere, and his captors wanted to put him to death. "One of them," he said, "aimed his gun at me, and at such close quarters that the bayonet-point scratched my forehead, but as I instinctively knocked up the weapon, happily the shot missed me." Besides this slight injury the under lid of his right eye was slit open, but luckily the optic nerve was untouched. After brutally pound-

ing him on the head, his captors left him half dead on the ground. At last, however, he was carried to the military hospital, where, at a later date, on my own release from the arsenal, I discovered him already recovering from his hurts. And at the end of a few weeks he was able to paint again.

V

Soon after these events I left Naples and went to Florence. But Morelli remained behind, leading a secluded life in his studio, and before long he and his friend Altamura won the two travelling scholarships entitling them to study in Rome. Nevertheless, with its usual policy of distrust, our Bourbon Government refused to allow the prize-winners to leave the kingdom, and ordered them to pursue their art at Naples instead. Altamura presently forfeited his pension, because he thought it safer to cross the frontier. Morelli could not obtain even a brief leave of absence before a much later time, and even then had only ten days with me in Florence. Meanwhile he laboured steadily, painting various pictures as prize works. His subjects—taken almost invariably from the lives of early Christians—corresponded more or less with the state of his spirits, which were at a very low ebb, both in consequence of the deplorable condition of the country, now a prey to the fiercest reactionary measures, and of the obstacles to his marriage. The first of his new pictures represented a neophyte praying in the catacombs by a martyr's grave. The second displayed a martyr and his helpmate chained together near the stake that awaited them. The sequel to this theme was given

in another picture showing the same pair transported to heaven by angels from the scene of their martyrdom in the Colosseum below. These works were not merely evidences of the intense sadness of Morelli's mood, but likewise of the earnestness of his endeavours to express Christian feeling and the Christian ideal in a manner that differed from Overbeck's by its superior plasticity—that is to say, by assigning a larger share to colour, relief, and aerial perspective.

But he had daringly tackled certain problems which he was not yet quite fitted to solve. The designing and painting of two great figures borne through the air by angels was a task he could have lightly and successfully accomplished in one of his small sketches. But in developing it on a large scale on canvas he was forced to acknowledge that work of this sort required the practised touch of a thoroughly competent artist; that at present his technique was too faulty to enable him to cope with it. His floating figures, and more especially the angels, were hard and heavy to the eye. The effects of light and air were deficient, and lacked transparency. Nevertheless, the grandeur of his ideas and the courage with which this youthful beginner dashed at difficulties that might have daunted any great and experienced artist, tended to increase one's faith in the splendid future that awaited him.

But the immediate question was the necessity of conquering the difficulties barring his way. It seemed to him as though he were faced by an impassable wall, and he felt profoundly discouraged. However, at this juncture Palizzi's method proved most helpful to him. "I needed comforting," he wrote, "so I went back to Palizzi." Morelli, however, did not take an exaggerated view of the result to be obtained by this return. As he justly observes, "Palizzi painted what

he saw, while I tried to paint what I felt and thought. I had first to create my own inner world, and then learn how to render it truthfully on canvas."

Owing to a remarkable natural talent for painting, Palizzi was a giant in his own limited sphere, but wrongly believed that sphere to be the whole world of art. His studies of donkeys, of ruminating oxen, and browsing cows were marvellously true to nature. Compared with his animals, the figures in academic paintings seemed mere cardboard caricatures of the human form. His work seemed to be living nature itself. "What analytical research, what technical inspiration was needed," wrote Morelli, "to enable Palizzi to render surface values with such admirable skill! He contrived special brushes of his own for the exact reproduction of his animals' coats. Even a donkey's stable heaped with dung was a subject he delighted to paint. Although his branch of art was very limited, it comprised a whole world of light and colour." At that time light and colour were what Morelli most needed for the better interpretation of his soaring ideas. "We two were as the poles asunder," he said in conclusion, "but Palizzi's method of analysing colours, their combinations, and their harmony, taught me how effect and expression could be best attained." [1]

VI

Now, therefore, the quest for reality guided Morelli to a new stage of his artistic career. Just then the historical element was beginning to predominate in literature and art. Walter Scott, Manzoni, and

[1] *Vide* "Recollections," &c.

Grossi wrote historical novels, and Niccolini produced historical plays, while French and Belgian artists, headed by Delaroche and Gallait, painted historical pictures. Morelli knew nothing of these foreign schools of art, and had no direct knowledge of their works, having never travelled abroad. But in those days there was a certain Giuseppe Tipaldi—commonly called Don Peppino—who kept a stationer's shop in Naples. This Tipaldi was a staunch Liberal, a very honest and intelligent person, and most devoted to his business. Like all men of that stamp, he had considerable influence in the city, and used it for good ends. He was the owner of the clandestine press that printed all the proclamations of the Liberal party, did the work promptly, and charged nothing for it. Tipaldi had also some influence on Neapolitan art; for his shop was the only one supplied with good engravings and lithographs of the finest pictures produced in France and Belgium. Morelli was always the first to see these consignments in Tipaldi's private office, and always gave his advice on the best way of arranging them in the window for the public eye. I remember his enthusiastic delight the day he had his first view of Delaroche's famous work, "The Murder of the Duke de Guise."

Morelli, too, was now beginning to paint historical subjects, and this gave him an opportunity of studying as much realism as he required without lapsing into the so-called "*verisme*." His Cesar Borgia headed the list of these new works. The subject, gleaned from Guicciardini's "History of Italy," represented an incident of the conquest of Capua, when the victorious Borgia had all the most beautiful women of the city paraded before him so that he might take his choice. Amid a crowd of figures one sees, to the right, the

sneering, arrogant face of the Duke, who is coldly watching the struggle going on across the hall, where a trooper, whose face is half hidden by his helmet, is straining back the arms of a lovely girl in order to prevent her from hiding her charms from his chief's lustful eye. This work is plainly inspired by the French school of art, and more particularly by Robert Fleury's "At the Tribunal of the Inquisition." The central figure in the French picture is a friar whose hood has fallen forward over his face in his efforts to expose the bust of a beautiful prisoner to the Inquisitor's greedy gaze. Apparently the victim had been doomed to death at the stake, for the ominous pile was visible in the background. But although Morelli's realistic studies were turned to good account in the pictures he produced at this period, his historical style had not yet reached its full and final development.

It was impossible for a man of so fanciful a nature to always depict real incidents exactly as they had taken place. His imagination would sometimes revolt against the bondage of actual facts, so that he chiefly used history as a framework for eminently pictorial and beautiful *motifs* which were simply the offspring of his own brain. No one could suppose that his "Vespri Siciliani"—one of the best of this series—represented any authentic incident. It shows us three women in the dress of the period, plainly in the act of taking flight, for they are rushing towards the admiring spectator as though seeking to escape from the canvas. Their speed of movement is marvellously rendered, both as regards draughtsmanship and colouring. Far away in the background one has a glimpse of the fighting crowd. Nevertheless, three fugitive women hardly suffice to represent the Sicilian revo-

lution that freed the island from the tyranny of France.

But the first picture of this kind that established Morelli's reputation throughout Italy was his "Iconoclasts," which created an immense sensation when exhibited in Florence in 1861. It represents the savage punishment of an artist monk. The captive figure is seen in bold relief against a light background as he sits awaiting his appointed doom with an air of steadfast endurance. He has been sentenced to lose the hand that had painted the guilty pictures, and his wrist is already in the executioner's grasp. On the left stand two soldiers, depicted with incomparable dramatic force, who look threateningly at the victim. One of them is tearing a canvas to shreds before his eyes, the other is trampling on a painted panel and splitting it with his lance. The poor friar, though resigned to his own fate, shrinks from the sight, more distressed by the destruction of his work than by the torture he is about to endure. In the background is a mourning woman who is hiding her face to avoid the painful spectacle. But the masterly force and reality of the two truculent ruffians was what attracted most notice as a true revelation of the painter's skill. From that moment Italy recognised the extent of Morelli's genius.

VII

As soon as he had finished the painting that was to win him his first laurels, Morelli had gone abroad with Tipaldi to visit the great foreign schools of ancient and modern art. He returned from his travels full of enthusiasm for Rembrandt's works, and particularly for the well-known "Night Watch." "That is true

painting," he wrote; "those are real living figures. The treatment of light and colour was the work of a genius, and this genius was the founder of a family to which I am proud to belong, if only in the remotest degree."[1] He already felt assured of speedily learning to render light and atmosphere. For modern German art he had little liking. He thought it too abstract, too *voulu*, too scientific. "It almost seemed as though my ignorance of the German tongue prevented me from comprehending German ideas in the German fashion."[2] On the other hand, he had a great admiration for the French school, and also for the Belgian painter, Gallait, particularly for the latter's noble picture of Count Egmont preparing to mount the scaffold.

On his return to Naples, "with all those pictures in my head," as he used to say, a happier life awaited him. He had now been married for some years to the bride he had so long failed to win, and was already the father of several children. Simultaneously with Palizzi he had gained a professorship at the Academy of Fine Arts, and infused new life and strength into that institution. A crowd of gifted young painters were trained in his school, such as Toma, Parisi, Boschetti, Tofano, Miola, Dalbono, Netti, and many others. Even Celentano, who had studied with Mancinelli, finally succumbed to the spell of Morelli's inspiration, and suddenly leapt to fame, though his premature decease left him little time to enjoy his success. During this period Morelli produced a large number of pictures, all more or less on historical themes. One of these, first exhibited in Florence, was called "A Florentine Morning in the Days of Lorenzo dei Medici." The masterly effects of light

[1] "Recollections," &c. [2] Ibid.

and colour distinguishing this work captured the admiration of the Tuscan school, and particularly that of its celebrated member, Stefano Ussi, who had already shown his high opinion of our Neapolitan painter's work; for while engaged on his famous picture, "The Expulsion of the Duke of Athens," Ussi had not only consulted Morelli about the details of the composition, but also used him as a model for the figure of Cerretieri Visdomini, which is perhaps the best bit of colour in the whole work.

Morelli gained fresh success in Milan with his "Baths of Pompei," a composition in which the light comes from above, and is diffused over the whole canvas, falling directly on some figures, by reflection on others, and thus fully displaying the mastery he had now acquired in rendering *chiaroscuro* effects. Both these paintings may be included in the list of his historical pieces, but were chiefly studies of the problems of light and colour he was endeavouring to solve. Morelli never came to a standstill in art, and all that he did seemed intended as a preparation for greater achievements. His "Lara and the Page," also produced in Milan, was only a small work, but its spontaneity of line and marvellous depth of colour won general praise, not only at the time, but also in recent days at the Venice Exhibition.

But the chief production of Morelli's early years, and undoubtedly one of the best, is "Tasso Reading his Poem to Eleonora"—with almost life-size figures—for which he obtained a prize at the Paris Exhibition. The poet is seen in half shadow to the right, while the figure of the listening princess, who sits facing him, languidly reclining in her chair, is in the full light of a window in the centre of the canvas. The

spectator plainly sees that she is the object of the poet's love, that his verses are addressed to her alone. But another woman sits beside him in the shadow, while a third is placed with her back to the window. In this work also the varied play of light thrown on the group, and used to accentuate the different feelings expressed in the faces of the three women, is a striking proof of his skill.

VIII

Shortly after this time some friction with the academic authorities impelled Palizzi and Morelli to resign their professorships, a step that, although unavoidable, caused them much regret. Consequently their class of clever young painters gradually melted away, greatly to the detriment of Neapolitan art. The two masters, however, were presently appointed to the Industrial Museum of Naples—Palizzi as Director, Morelli as Professor of Art. The former at once started a factory of a new species of majolica that has proved very profitable to Neapolitan trade, while Morelli not only gave valuable help as a teacher of painting, but also devoted many years and infinite pains towards the completion of an artistic undertaking that, although left unnoticed—so far as I know—by his biographers and critics, he considered to be one of such importance that he gave his whole attention to it for a very long time. Whenever I came to Naples I found him full of the subject; he always took me to see how the work was getting on, and was eloquent about the difficulties he had had to overcome, because every one was opposed to the scheme and refused to

credit its utility. He, on the contrary, thought it would be the best possible means of promoting artistic manufactures. The work in question was the grand façade of the Industrial Museum, composed solely of majolica and in a good Renaissance style of architecture. Its delicately tinted ground is decorated with groups of allegorical figures typical of the fine arts. Morelli had drawn and coloured all the designs for this work, then moulded them in clay, and had them baked by his pupils. This façade, now well known to the public, will never lose its freshness of tint, and can be safely and easily cleaned. But while the work was going on Morelli's patience was severely tried by seeing how few persons realised the value of his experiment, and how many obstacles were raised to impede its success.

Just at this time he was on the eve of adopting the final manner of work that was to display the fulness of his originality by a specially individual manifestation of his temperament and art. It would be impossible to fix the exact moment when he first employed this new style, since there is no settled line of demarcation between this final manner and the preceding steps gradually leading up to it.

As I have already noted, Morelli never came to a standstill in art. Every one of his pictures is an advance towards the ideal he had in view, and that he tries to grasp in a hundred different ways. Sometimes that ideal seems so near that the artist feels already in touch with it; then all of a sudden it recedes, almost disappears, and then comes again within sight, until at long last his triumph is assured and all difficulties are conquered. One of Morelli's admiring friends was not far wrong when he exclaimed on seeing his last works, "This man was born old and died young!"

There is one work in particular that clearly displays the tremendous efforts he made to create a new world of his own, almost, as it were, by freeing himself from the bonds of the flesh to enter the realm of the spirit, and transform painting into poetry. This work is his celebrated "Temptation of St. Anthony." He had often discussed this subject with me, even in the days of his youth.

"It's so strange," he often said, "that painters should always represent St. Anthony as being tempted by horrible monsters, disgusting furies, old witches on broomsticks, scorpions, serpents, and revolting beasts of every kind. Who could be tempted by creatures such as those? Easy enough to resist *them!*" he would cry, using a forcible Neapolitan expression. So, after renewed study of the subject, he ended by showing us the Saint suffering temptation from his own passions, which, to his imagination, are embodied in the shape of bewitching and voluptuous females. In his first rendering of the theme the Saint is seen standing erect with his back against the wall of his cavern, his hands clutching the rocks as though seeking protection from the fantastically seductive visions which he mistakes for living beings, and who, to his alarm, are gliding towards him as they emerge from the matting on the floor of the cell, where he had hoped to find peace by prayer and penance. But Morelli's final version of the theme was the well-known picture in which the Saint sits huddled on the ground with his arms crossed, his emaciated fingers tearing at his breast, his eyes dilated and his mouth half open as though emitting a sibilant yell of terror. He is looking upwards, with a dazed expression, and one feels that he is shaken with carnal tremors at the close approach of the foremost

temptress, who has crawled so near that her head almost touches the hem of his robe. In this way Morelli gives a more graphic rendering of the deadly struggle of the senses against the spirit determined to subdue them, and that conquers in the end. The nobility of the Saint's countenance is the fruit of this victory.

Two more of Morelli's pictures demand mention at this point, and first of all the "Ascension" he painted for the Chapel Royal in Naples. This shows how his realistic tendency was still warring against the Christian idealism that was to be the final phase of his art. Besides, he had to overcome serious technical difficulties in executing the work. The canvas was to be placed in the dome of the chapel, and all its fore-shortened figures had to be seen from below. Some of these figures are ascending to heaven, others coming down to earth. In writing on the matter to the late Senator Lampertico, Morelli says: "I cannot imagine why the artists who have painted the Ascension should always represent the Apostles in the act of watching their Master's flight to heaven. Also, as if that were not enough, certain artists show us some of the said Apostles peeping into the vacant tomb, where the traditional flowers are already blooming. They never seem to realise that a mass of masonry is a discordant note in the centre of the picture. . . ." And he adds in conclusion, "If, when looking at the blue sky, you suddenly perceive a white cloudlet floating across it, this will instantly impress you as the most beautiful, most pictorial effect—in short, as the keynote of the work."[1] Therefore, inspired by this perfectly realistic idea, he depicted the Virgin being

[1] *Vide* the Commemorative Speech of N. Dalbono, delivered at the Royal Academy of Naples.

carried up to heaven by angels. The centre of the canvas is occupied by a long procession of flying and almost transparent angelic forms, who are gazing, praying, rejoicing; and they too stand out against the azure sky that fills the background. Below, are symbolical figures of all the virtues bequeathed to the world by the Madonna at the moment of deserting it for the heavenly throne above.

Another work, but of a much later period, was Morelli's composition in mosaic adorning the façade of the Cathedral of Amalfi. Its subject is derived from Revelation, chap. iv. The solemnly majestic figure of the Redeemer, enthroned, stands out from a golden background; His grave brows are encircled by a luminous halo; about Him are the symbols of the four Evangelists. At His feet bend the twenty-four elders who have cast their crowns before the throne, and reverently worship Him who rules in heaven.

From his earliest years Morelli's great admiration for Quattrocento painting had been coupled with asimilar feeling for the Byzantine style of art he now reproduced in this mosaic. He had already shown this feeling in his work at the Nunziante Chapel in Naples. But the special feature of the Amalfi mosaic, produced at a much later period of Morelli's artistic career, was the harmonious fusion displayed in it of the delicately finished draughtsmanship of modern art with the primitive, strange, and almost archaic manner of Byzantine painting. This is the quality that renders the mosaic so peculiarly fascinating.

IX

After the labours we have recorded, Morelli entered on the concluding phase of his art. As Professor

Venturi has noted, even the material form of his work was changed, for he now used oblong canvases. This alteration may, I think, be partly due to his wish to gain more space for the landscape backgrounds with which his figures so admirably combine. Even in his early work, "Fugitives from Aquileia," the figures escaping down the river on rafts and boats stand out from the sky behind them, but are fused with the atmospheric effects depicted, their hardness of line being softened by his new method of colour. The works he gave us during this final period also differ from his earlier ones in other and more essential respects. Being chiefly on Biblical themes, Oriental surroundings were naturally required, and though Morelli had never visited the East, he had learnt its characteristics from his large collection of photographs. With this help, in addition to much study of the Scriptures and the Christian spirit within him, he was able to paint Eastern scenes in harmony with the Biblical figures, intended to personify and give voice, as it were, to the message of the Eastern world that enframed them.

One of these new pictures—though by no means the best—may be considered to inaugurate the Biblical series in virtue of its theme, "Christ walking on the waters." It was a subject that had long occupied Morelli's thoughts. The Redeemer, a lonely, solemn figure, clad in red draperies, with wind-tossed locks, calmly moves over the waves, and stands out imposingly against the background of blue sky and water. But when Morelli executed this piece his powers were not sufficiently matured to enable him to cope with the technical difficulties it presented. Both air and water lack the transparency and distance required to convey the idea of infinite space, yet those

qualities are indispensable to a composition of this sort. But in his "Deposition from the Cross," on the contrary, he succeeded in giving an effect of deeply poetic mystery.

The Redeemer's body, swathed like an Egyptian mummy, just as Lazarus is swathed in many paintings, lies stretched on the ground across the canvas. Light falls on the figure from a lantern that is hidden from the spectator by one of the persons standing erect near the body. At the Redeemer's feet are the kneeling, huddled forms of the weeping Marys, a group that is all the more touching from its indistinctness. High in the background one discerns the two thieves on their crosses. In the sky, far away to the left, the faint gleams of a waning moon shed an infinitely poetical effect on the awful scene that is soon to be shrouded in blackest night. This work, although an important sketch rather than a finished picture, may be decidedly included among Morelli's best triumphs, and finds a worthy pendant in his "Christ Derided." In the latter we see the majestic form of the Redeemer, crowned with thorns, blindfolded, and casting a great shadow on the wall, in singular contrast with the group of coarse, sneering, and almost disgusting figures who assail Him with mockery and insult. On the opposite side of the picture, feebly lighted by a lantern on the floor, an uplifted hand is seen shadowed on the wall, together with that of the rod with which the Saviour was scourged.

Morelli next produced a number of works representing the Saviour in broad daylight in some marvellously Eastern setting. We see the Divine form knee-deep in spring flowers, addressing words of good tidings to His followers, who are likewise half buried in a riot

of blooming plants, for Nature herself seems to be quickened by the Divine revelation. In another we behold Christ in the wilderness, under the glare of an Eastern sun, with His eyes fixed on the Evil One, who is issuing from the rocks to tempt Him. A third canvas shows Christ keeping watch by night beside the slumbering Apostles, and looking at them with infinite tenderness. Next, we see Him calling the sons of Zebedee to follow Him. In this work He stands upright on the shore by the boat, from which the fishermen are hurrying in an ecstasy of zeal to obey the Master's summons. One of the finest of these pictures, now in the Roman Gallery of Modern Art, was suggested by the verse: "Et angeli ministrabant ei." Christ is seated in the midst of an Eastern wilderness, but His head is perhaps the least successful portion of the work, whereas the landscape is amazingly fine. There is an endless gradation of light and colour in the various planes beneath the transparent vault of heaven, while angels are seen approaching through this magic atmosphere bearing gifts of precious spices and flowers. As throughout the whole series, the Redeemer's form is in harmony, nay, even identified, so to say, with the surrounding landscape, which is one of Morelli's happiest creations. The spectator's mind is spellbound, as though by strains of celestial melody, and, overcome by a strange rapture, he seems to hear within him an echo of those dying words of Plotinus, which Giordano Bruno is said to have repeated as the flames rose about him at the stake: "I make a final effort to reunite the divine element in myself with the divine part of the universe."

Various other works of Morelli might deserve to be included in this Biblical series, not from the nature of

their subjects, but from the style of their execution. For instance, in the "Loves of the Angels" one sees the fluttering of the angels' great white wings as they sweep through the flowers of the Earthly Paradise. Also in "Mahomet's Prayer before Battle" we behold the Prophet standing erect, imploring victory with arms raised to heaven, in the van of his host, that, stretched prone on the earth, resembles a multi-coloured, storm-lashed sea. Though no part of Christian history, the setting of the scene is equally Oriental; there is the same ardour of religious feeling, the same style of execution.

On the other hand, and in virtue of their theme, Morelli's Holy Virgins—some of which are variations from the fundamental idea—all distinctly belong to this phase of his art. One of these Madonnas is descending from heaven by flower-strewn golden stairs, and is holding the Babe aloft, as though displaying Him to the world He comes to save, and from the joyous Infant, with tiny outstretched arms, emanates the light shed on the scene. The other Madonnas due to Morelli's brush are equally original and inspired by the same piously poetic feeling.

Certain critics have asked if Morelli's "Virgins," together with his Biblical Eastern works, are really in accordance with tradition and really inspired by religious belief, or merely artistic creations of his brain. It has been also asked what would have become of his imaginary landscapes had he ever visited the East and seen the real country with his own eyes. In my opinion questions of this kind need no reply. To Morelli, art was the one real thing. Art constituted his faith, his religion, his whole spiritual life. Outside of art all was vain, empty illusion. He could not have comprehended a religion incapable of being

applied to art. Had he gone to the East his landscapes might have been different, but certainly the East seen by his bodily eyes would have been always changed into the land of his dreams, and always remained his own personal creation.

X

One of the longest undertakings of Morelli's later years, and pursued by him almost to the last, was a series of designs for the illustrations of a splendid edition of the Bible, recently published in Holland, with the assistance of the greatest living artists. According to the best judges, Morelli must have surpassed all his competitors, for his name stood first on the list. Shortly after his death the director of the enterprise wrote to the artist's family in the following terms: "Comme vous savez, Mons. Morelli tient, pour ainsi dire, la tête dans cette œuvre. Nous sommes fier de posséder de lui sept dessins, et nous pouvons vous dire aussi, que c'est lui qui nous a donné les dessins les plus importants." Then one of his colleagues also wrote: "As I too am an artist, I trust you will allow me to express my opinion of Mons. Morelli's work. *Il nous donne le sentiment le plus intime, une poesie pictoriale, sans perdre de vue les limites du terrain*" (that is, painting) "*qu'il a choisi pour exprimer ce qu'il sent.*" "So he is not compelled to resort to *ces petits moyens quasi symboliques. . . .*"

The same opinions were expressed by the celebrated Alma Tadema, who was one of the very distinguished artists who contributed to the great work. On first seeing Morelli's designs in London, Alma

Tadema hastened to write to his friend: "*Ils sont tous des révélations. Merci, bien merci pour le bonheur que vous m'avez procuré de nouveau avec votre art. Enfin nous voilà embarqués ensemble, et j'en suis fier, car vous êtes le roi du noir et du blanc.*" So great a painter as Alma Tadema would not have employed such expressions unless deeply convinced of their truth.

It may be also remarked that the admiration accorded to Morelli was not merely a tribute to his lofty powers, but also to the thorough conscientiousness of his art and the proofs he continually gave of it throughout his career. His pictures were painted and repainted over and over again, nay, often entirely destroyed in order to be started afresh on a different plan. And he never ceased correcting them until sure of having exhausted every possible means of improvement. He not only disregarded the time and trouble lavished on his works, but was equally careless as to the profit they might bring, for his pure love of art often made him oblivious of pressing domestic needs. Any one else, perhaps, might have regarded the commission for the Biblical designs as a matter of secondary importance, seeing how small a price was offered for them; but Morelli never gave a thought to the money value of his productions. In fact, from the moment he undertook those designs he continued to work on them until satisfied that he had found, or rather invented, a new form of art of a peculiarly suitable kind. In fact, his designs are totally unlike the thousands of Bible illustrations now produced in both hemispheres, although many of these have considerable merit.

Unluckily, his designs were not all engraved with equal skill, a matter that caused him great annoyance.

But in the original black and white all are of high value and complete pictures in every respect. Best of all perhaps is his drawing of the Prodigal Son. We behold the worn-out, repentant prodigal crouching on the ground at his father's gate, while the old man is seen hurriedly descending a great flight of steps with tear-worn eyes, with aged arms outstretched, and apparently uttering a cry of pity, love and joy combined, that seems to fill the whole picture with its sound. The beautiful landscape in the background, the imposing building and terraced garden at the head of the steps, add force to the parable, while the father's haste to press the returned wanderer to his heart gives real moral value to the technical merits of this marvellous design.

We are all familiar with the manner in which Salome is usually depicted by great artists of every nationality. We are shown a smiling girl offering the head of St. John on a great golden charger to an equally smiling mother. Morelli, however, considered this to be an inhuman mode of treating the subject. So in his design we note that the charger with the Saint's head, surrounded by a halo, has been left on the floor, while its terrified bearer has flown to her mother, who is giving her a kiss. "*Le cœur de la femme vous a guidé*," wrote Alma Tadema to Morelli, *à propos* to this particular drawing. In another design, representing the High Priest Ananias when at God's command he lays his hands on the head of the now converted Saul, and thus restores his sight, the priest's attitude, the expressiveness of his gesture, and the countenances of the women behind him as they await the promised miracle, are all rendered with incomparable skill, although some of the details are imperfectly rendered in the engraving. A third

design represents Jesus Christ in a Galilean field of flowers, where a crowd of sufferers, halt and blind, sick and dying, has gathered about Him to receive health and comfort.

In examining this composition, and noting with delight how much expression Morelli could infuse into tiny figures, apparently dashed in by hasty strokes of brush or pen, one might take this to be the result of some happy improvisation. But on visiting Morelli's studio you would find that every one of these small figures was the outcome of much patient preparatory labour. You would also find that sometimes, before executing one of the Bible designs in black and white, he painted a careful sketch of it in oils; and it was frequently his habit to make numerous studies in chalk or pencil of figures barely indicated in the finished work. He not only made a hundred different drawings for his St. Anthony, but even for the figures in smaller sketches; while he had portfolios full of designs for pictures he never found time to paint. Among those sketches is a large one entitled "Il Venerdi Santo," showing a string of worshippers going one at a time to kiss the crucifix that rests cushioned on the floor, according to the Good Friday custom. The scene is framed by a faintly indicated choir of black-robed monks. Yet Morelli had made many preparatory studies of all these figures in order to give every one of them the desired pose and expression. There is also the rough sketch of a picture representing a troubadour singing and playing on his lute before a crowd of youthful nuns, whose forms are barely outlined; but he made so many drawings for their heads, as to form a real gallery of facial expression. The study of this collection has a very different effect upon us from that

produced, let us say, by an examination of Ariosto's manuscripts, which show the jungle of changes and corrections through which the poet had to cut his way before attaining to the exquisite simplicity of the printed verses, which apparently flowed from his pen with such true spontaneity.

XI

This biographical notice might now be brought to a close. Nevertheless, there is still one point that I feel bound to explain, and for which I would claim my readers' indulgent attention. It is a problem no critic has touched, yet it is one that positively cries for solution, in order to allow us to gain a clearer conception of Morelli's intellectual and moral nature, especially during the last phase of his career, when his native originality was most brilliantly displayed. What first inspired him with the desire to paint works on Biblical themes which, besides requiring Oriental scenery, had to be rendered in a truly Christian spirit? In earlier works, such as the "Iconoclasts," the "Sicilian Vespers," the "Tasso," we can trace, more or less, their derivation from some anterior cause, some suggestion from other schools of art. But nothing of the sort can be said with regard to what may be called his Biblical and Christian paintings. What inspired those harmonies of light and colour, figures and scenery, what, the enchanting proofs they afforded of a lofty moral ideal? Of course, it would be easy enough to reply that all this proceeded from himself, was the fruit of his own intelligence. But although the doctrine of "environment," according to which every

idea comes to us from outside, may not be positively true, neither can we accept the opposite belief, according to which great men would seem to exist in a void without deriving anything from their surroundings. Had Dante lived in our own age he would not be the Dante we know. Therefore, what was the source of Morelli's religious art?

Morelli had a thoroughly Neapolitan temperament, and as he lived in Naples all his life, must have received his inspiration from Naples. Are we, then, to believe that paintings of so ideally refined and poetic a nature, so impregnated with a lofty morality that moves the spectator to spiritual thoughts, could have been actually inspired by his native city? Are we not hearing continually of the corruption of Naples, the immorality of the Southern provinces? As all my friends know, I am not afflicted with the mistaken local patriotism that tries to conceal all local defects and vices. On the contrary, I have always been one of the first to mention, and even perhaps to exaggerate, them in endeavouring to be strictly impartial. However, this confessed tendency of mine entitles me to claim belief when I tell you that a long course of experience and conscientious investigation has brought me to the following conclusion.

In this Neapolitan—or, to put it more correctly, this Southern—soil there grows and flourishes, more conspicuously than elsewhere, a flower of virtue that would suffice in itself to redeem the whole nation, did we appreciate its full value and feel a just pride in it. This pure flower of virtue is the Neapolitan mother. To perceive the true extent of her heroic courage it is necessary to have lived many years away from Naples. I have known and admired many families of Northern and Central Italy, many English, German,

French, and American families, and can frankly declare that, while finding them superior to ourselves in numerous particulars, I have never seen anything to equal, much less to surpass, the heroic self-effacement of Neapolitan mothers. I am certain that no Neapolitan can fail to possess in his home circle, or among his kindred, at least one elect being to whom he owes all his best qualities. The Neapolitan mother is always ready to sacrifice her time, health, and peace, her whole life in fact, for the good of her family. Mothers of this kind are unknown to the world, since they have no personal hopes or ambitions. One cannot be sure whether saints still tread the earth at the present time. But it is an assured fact that when we look at the revered images of these Southern mothers, of these beings so superior to ourselves, we are all overcome by the same feelings, and experience the same irresistible impulse to kneel down in adoration of their transcendent moral grandeur.

Well, I may frankly say that my sister Virginia, who was Morelli's wife and the mother of his children, was one of the privileged beings described above. It is impossible to leave her unmentioned, when I know how greatly she influenced her husband's art as well as his life. It is all very well to talk of surroundings, of the effect upon Morelli of Neapolitan air and sunshine, of the works of Palizzi and others; but stronger and deeper still is the influence of one soul upon that of another. I should not venture here to describe my own sister, or speak of her doings, were I not profoundly convinced of the truth of my words, and that all who knew her will be equally sure of it. What reason could I have to exaggerate? Any rhetorical or too laudatory phrase would be a profanation of her memory. Besides, many years have passed since she

was snatched away, and her name is already buried in the solemn silence of the tomb.

No words could fitly express the lofty magnanimity she displayed in every detail of her life. But I cannot abstain from giving one or two instances of it. At one time, chancing to detect certain symptoms of feminine vanity in one of her little girls, she took the matter seriously to heart and conceived exaggerated fears of the consequences such a tendency might entail. So one day she dressed the child in her prettiest clothes, adorned her with a treasured coral necklace, and then took her to walk in the dirtiest and poorest quarter of Naples. And presently, when a grimy, ragged little girl asked for alms, my sister said to her child: "Look at that poor little creature; she must be shivering with cold with only those rags upon her! Do you think that is right while you have plenty of warm, dainty clothes?" In this way she persuaded her generous child to strip off her fine clothes, dress the beggar in them, and give her the dear coral necklace as well. Then my sister produced a shabby old frock for her own child, and, delighted with the result of the experiment, took her home, as it were, in triumph.

While I was writing the "Southern Letters," in which I revealed the miseries of the Neapolitan poor, I also described the horrible slums (*fondaci*) they dwelt in, but which I had not yet explored in person. My sister, however, had carefully inspected them for me, and it was by the aid of her letters—from which I gave many quotations—that I was able to describe abominations unknown to Italians in general, and equally unknown to many Neapolitans.

Her remarks were accurate, intelligent, and full of benevolence. In describing one of the long, narrow caverns in the tufa cliffs, known as the "Rampe di

Brancaccio," where the beds stand as closely together as in hospital wards, she wrote to me as follows: "Even in the midst of all these miseries one perceives the false pride of our human race. The lodgers able to pay an extra penny or so for the right of placing their beds near the holes serving for windows, and thus getting a trifle more light, feel an almost aristocratic contempt for the poorer folk compelled to remain behind in the darkness."

As is too frequently the case with extremely affectionate and tender natures, my sister also had suffered a martyrdom of grief. It is enough to say that in the early years of her married life she had lost two children, who both died of the same illness within a few hours. She was so overwhelmed by this catastrophe that Morelli took her off to Rome to divert her thoughts, for she seemed to be in danger of losing her reason. In a long and tear-stained letter, she afterwards gave me an account of this painful journey, and I remember that on reading it to my friend, the poet Aleardi, he exclaimed with a sob in his voice, "There is nothing finer than this in our whole literature!"

"The coach," wrote my sister, "went on, now at foot pace, now at a trot; and I saw that we passed trees, mountains, rivers, and the Roman Campagna, without being able to realise what I was seeing. Everything seemed to me like bad daubs on canvas. Only when we were getting near to Rome, late in the evening, and I saw the first houses with lighted windows, I suddenly awoke as from a dream. Then the thought came to me that families dwelt in those houses, that families have children, that children are the joy of their parents. And my children were no more! My God! What crime can I have committed,

to be robbed of the babes I so dearly loved, who were so necessary to my life?" But the very intensity of her sufferings increased her power of loving, and made her rapturously devoted to the children she had later.

When Morelli finally won her for his bride, in spite of his prolonged courtship he had been allowed few opportunities of studying her character. So, all of a sudden, he made the discovery that his wife was a very exceptional creature, and totally unlike any one he had known before. His passion for art and his pursuit of fame—which already seemed alluringly within reach—had tended to enlarge his mind and raise him to a much higher level than that of his early associations.

But the love of glory, however noble a passion, is, unavoidably, somewhat heathen and selfish. Our ego is too much to the fore. In fact, we are striving to build an altar to our own personality. So it is easy to comprehend that in the eyes of a youth for whom glory was the one golden dream and the highest ideal in existence, the superior being at his side, calmly pursuing her own course through the storms and trials of life, ever thirsting to practise self-denial and self-sacrifice, while regarding all human vanities with the deepest contempt, must have occasionally appeared to him as almost too superior, too opposed to human nature, nay, as almost a living reproach and condemnation of all his most cherished desires.

My sister had much love and admiration for art in itself, and longed to see her husband achieve greatness in it; not, however, for the mere sake of winning fame, but because she recognised that art was a benefit to the world. Thus, for a certain time, the young couple seemed unable to arrive at a complete under-

standing. I well remember how many letters I had to write to both of them from Florence just then.

But as soon as Morelli realised the tragic intensity of her grief, and the heroic strength of her love for the children, for whom she would have readily given her life, and even readily forfeited her soul's salvation, if by so doing she could have secured their happiness in this life or the next—when he saw that, in her case, deeds came before words, and reality stretched beyond the boundaries of the ideal, he became, so to say, her willing captive and slave, and hardly retained any will of his own. He left her to manage all the family affairs, to look after the children and make all arrangements for their education. He handed over to her all the money he received, without even remembering to ask what she did with it. He avoided saying anything about her, as though she were too lofty a being to be described in words. The influence she exercised upon him seemed to resemble the effect of gentle, refreshing showers upon dried-up soil, thus coaxing from it a fresh crop of spring flowers. For her influence swayed both his mind and his heart, of which every emotion was transmuted into art, thus vindicating the truth of Vauvenargues' saying, "that all great ideas proceed from the soul." It was during this time that Morelli painted the Madonna coming down from heaven by flower-strewn golden stairs to show men the Babe God had sent to redeem them. Then, too, he produced a "Christ announcing the glad tidings" in a luminous scene where all nature seems rejoicing; we had the "Angels ministered unto Him," the "Christ healing the sick;" and the "White-winged angels wooing mortal brides in a paradise of flowers."

I do not know whether Alma Tadema ever

realised the full truth of those words he once wrote to Morelli, "*C'est le cœur de la femme qui vous a guidé.*" But it cannot be denied that the inspiriting influence of his wife was the guiding star of Morelli's existence, constantly leading his steps in the right direction, and above all during the last and most ideal phase of his career. Without his wife's aid Morelli could not have reached the height to which he attained, either as a painter or as a man. He acknowledged this himself. After her death he often wrote to me :—

"I have no ideas left, I cannot paint now, there is no one to suggest anything to me ; my art is buried in her grave." In fact, it was from his memories of her that he derived his last inspirations.

Possibly, to those who lived far from him my description may seem to be overwrought and rhapsodical. But all who were intimate with him and acquainted with the circumstances of his life will readily acknowledge that his artistic career, and particularly the grander part of it, was the result of the union of two characters and two souls : of a woman's Christian courage with the powerful genius of a great painter. The spiritual bond between them is impressed on the works we so heartily admire, and which breathe the harmony we find so ravishing. If, while gazing on these works, I hear some one repeating the usual talk about Neapolitan corruption and Neapolitan immorality, I seem to see those chosen souls looking forth for an instant from their tomb, seem to hear them reply to their accuser : "If you really wish to raise your mind and heart to a higher plane, study those pictures of ours. They will point out the road you should take."

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DONATELLO

I

DONATELLO was born in Florence towards 1386, but the exact date of his birth has never been surely ascertained. It was a singularly prosperous age for literature and art. Italy was shaking off the bonds of mediæval tradition and laying the foundations of modern letters and art. The Middle Ages had given more thought to heaven than to earth, had despised nature, history, and all the passions of mankind. Accordingly their art had sought to express this yearning for the infinite, this impulse urging the creature towards the Creator, and had already reached a great height. But on coming to a certain point it was compelled to recognise that without close and continuous study of nature and mankind it could make no farther advance, and would sink into abstract conventionality. In fact, after Giotto's day signs of decadence began to appear; for painters of the Giotto school produced mechanical repetitions of what their master had created under the influence of true inspiration.

All at once the people of Italy dared to take a new course. Their eyes were turned from heaven to earth, from the spiritual to the natural world, from tradition to observation. Then, however, a strange

thing occurred. Men saw, and thought it their own discovery, that long ago the ancients had begun to study nature, and gained much from it. In fact, one need only compare the Antinous or the Belvedere Apollo with a Christ or Saint of Cimabue, or even Giotto, to be assured of this without further explanation. Hence it was perceived that the study of nature led us back to ancient art, and ancient art to nature. For both were forms of one and the same phenomenon.

Florence became the centre of the great intellectual revolution then accomplished in literature and the fine arts. It was an electric flame, as it were, that supplied light to the whole world. When the learned men first began to write books in Latin and Greek, they were apparently attempting to imitate the ancients, whereas they really created a new national literature. Italian painters no longer depicted Gothic architecture, but filled their backgrounds with edifices resembling the Pantheon and Colosseum; their draperies seemed copied from Greek and Roman statues; but the figures were those of living contemporaries frequenting the Florence streets. The Florentine spirit transformed the antiquity it imbibed, thus truly giving it new life instead of mechanically reproducing it; while even Nature herself was interpreted in a new spirit. The great event of that age consisted in the fact that the revived culture of Greece and Rome was added to that of the Christian world and thus gave birth to a new civilisation. By also taking the same course the painter's craft gave birth to the marvellous art of the Quattrocento—the school that, starting with Masaccio, arrives at Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Michelangelo—implied the creation of a new world of ideas. It was the greatest triumph yet achieved by the Italian mind. A triumph, indeed, that has

never been, can never be repeated, since in the life of a nation, as in that of an individual, there are certain episodes that can only happen once. Why could not sculpture attain to the same height as painting, since it already pursued the same path? This was the problem that concerned Donatello. But there were serious difficulties in the way. First of all the fact of Christian feeling being much more easily rendered in painting than in sculpture, and also that in the latter art the ancients were entirely unsurpassable. Certainly, the whole of our Renaissance period is pictorial rather than sculpturesque. This is plainly evidenced in our poetry, our architecture, and also in our sculpture, which art critics are often obliged to call picturesque. In spite of the marvels achieved, even at the dawn of the Trecento, by Nicolò Pisano and his school, we fail to discover throughout that century a single statue worthy to be compared with any of Giotto's best works. In those days sculpture was still indivisibly joined with architecture, of which it seemed to be the necessary adjunct, even when both appeared to be sinking into decay. Classical forms were mingled with those we wrongly call Gothic. A pointed arch was supported on pseudo Doric capitals; a twisted column, decorated with designs in different styles which went badly together, was planted on a Roman pediment. The mantle with which marble figures were uniformly and monotonously draped seemed intended to conceal instead of revealing the contours of the body. The heads still preserved the same air of aspiring to the Divine and the infinite; but the facial expression was becoming conventional and vague. The old style was perishing, the new style as yet unborn. Sculpture, however, which even in the Trecento had been the first to take the new

path, again seemed bent on advance. Signs of novel theories of design were to be observed in the workshops of the goldsmiths, who already practised their art on the method employed by Benvenuto Cellini at a later date. In fact, the silver altars of San Giovanni in Florence and San Jacopo in Pistoia, the results of a hundred years' labour by several generations of artists, were two of the finest works Italy had so far produced. The value of the metal, the necessarily minute proportions of the figures and decorations, together with the example furnished by the sister art of painting, having excluded the Gothic coarseness of execution, and demanding far greater finish, likewise promoted the quest for new subjects and a more definite mode of expression—that is to say, for a new form of art. In the sculpture of a subsequent time we can often detect the nature of its origin. And this was plainly shown in 1402, when the most successful competitors for the great bronze doors of the baptistry were found to be Ghiberti and Brunelleschi, both working goldsmiths. The bas-reliefs they sent in as specimen pieces are still in existence, and indisputable proofs of the re-birth of sculpture.

As all the world knows, Ghiberti won the victory, but Brunelleschi took his defeat calmly, convinced that his true vocation was for another branch of art. The son of well-to-do parents he had not only learnt the goldsmith's craft, but had also studied letters and mathematics ; also he had been moved to complement those studies by mastering the science of perspective and the rules of architecture. Thereupon he was seized with a double ambition : to discover a new style in architecture, and also the best mode of construction for the vast dome required to crown the Cathedral, an enterprise that every one else declared to be

impossible. With this end in view, he went to Rome in 1403 for the purpose of examining the great buildings there. During this journey, which was to prove so memorable an event in the history of art, he took a friend with him, and this friend was Donatello. The latter, being very poor, very young, and also a goldsmith, had eagerly accepted Brunelleschi's invitation. Deeming that the style of design he had been taught to use in his craft was much too paltry for the work he wished to do, he was anxious to be quit of it in order to acquire a broader style better suited for designs of a monumental order. So nothing could be more serviceable than the study of ancient art. Accordingly the two friends examined all the wonders of Rome, within and without the walls; Brunelleschi studying every building and measuring every dome, while Donatello was employed in sketching statues and ornamental designs.

When their slender store of cash was exhausted they worked part of the time in goldsmiths' shops in order to earn enough to continue their studies in Rome. We read of them that one day they seemed mad with joy because they had chanced to dig up an ancient urn full of coins, and after examining these, carefully, made drawings of the best of the number. Vasari tells us that on this account the two friends were called "the men of the treasure" (*quelli del tesoro*).

We find that Donatello was already back in Florence in 1406. Henceforth each of the two friends was pursuing his own art and his own destiny. Donatello was in the prime of his youth, full of ardour and hope. Everything seemed in favour of the revival of sculpture. The grandest churches

in Florence had been finished in the preceding century, and were now to be adorned with statues. There was plenty of money for the purpose, the greater guilds and the Government emulating one another in spending on the embellishment of the city; accordingly, there was no lack of commissions. Already the Duomo was humming with the sound of cheerful labour; for many artists were at work there, the foremost of them all being Niccolò da Arezzo, a man of rare talent, some of whose statues were highly esteemed by his contemporaries. With the aid of other artists Niccolò completed the second door on the north side of the Cathedral, facing Via dei Servi, and even Donatello had a share in the work. The carvings of this door show that the new Renaissance style was now in process of formation, and particularly with regard to decorative design (*ornato*). Meanwhile Lorenzo Ghiberti was engaged on the two first doors of the baptistry, and was also assisted by Donatello. The latter had not yet entirely shaken off the trammels of his earlier style, the painter's and goldsmith's touch being still too apparent; nevertheless, his genius was already flashing forth. At the same time the Sienese sculptor, Jacopo della Quercia, had also started on his honourable career.

Now that the old Tuscan genius for form and design was coming to life again, sculpture benefited by its influence in a thousand different ways. Nevertheless, a man of genius was required to effect a complete revolution in art, and this man was found in Donatello, who had already discerned the special problem he was destined to solve. His ambition was to be the creator of a new form of statuary, and he was, undoubtedly, the first to conceive a definite idea of that branch of art and of the new shape it must assume,

as well as of the limitations necessarily imposed upon it.

The painter has to overcome the enormous difficulty of producing effects of high relief and even space on a flat surface. But he has light and colour to assist him in his task. For in the realm of light and colour, which is certainly a creation of the human brain, and wherever matter is subject, as it were, to human rule, the painter has a freedom of action that is not always granted to the sculptor. If he depicts Piero Capponi in the act of destroying the treaty before the eyes of Charles VIII., the effect of the picture does not solely depend on the hero's attitude and action, but chiefly on the impression it makes on all the spectators of the deed, in whom it is mirrored and echoed, and also by the atmosphere, one might say, by the very walls framing the scene and seemingly responsive to our questioning glance. Any sculptor who should attempt to reproduce those same figures in marble would merely show his ignorance of the essential nature of statuary. In order to give us a faithful representation of Piero Capponi he would have to possess the very exceptional power of making the facial lines clearly denote the man's history. Michelangelo does not represent Moses in his wrath at the moment of breaking the tables of the law in the presence of the Jews; he merely gives us Moses as a calm, seated figure. But on examining this figure we are conscious of being in the presence of a great legislator, a mighty ruler of men, who will strike terror into the multitude the moment he rises to his feet. His glance suffices to recall his whole history to us. Such was the problem that Donatello was the first to attack.

But it was not to be solved by the sole study of

ancient art. The Greeks had no means of expressing the Christian mind or feeling. Their quest was for outer beauty of form, and their nature being simpler, more spontaneous, and more harmonious than our own, could be perfectly rendered in marble. They had no experience of the mental maladies, the tortures of remorse, or the whole inner life created by Christianity. In their times no ascetics, no heretics, no anchorites, no martyrs, no crusaders, no knight-errants had appeared in the world. But in Donatello's day all things were changed; the faculties of the human mind had been altered and multiplied. Therefore a new art was needed to represent the new inner life. Certainly, Christ and the Virgin cannot be chiselled in the same way as a Venus or an Apollo. Outward beauty was no longer the sole aim of art. This was bound to express character, which is the mind's outer form. Even the very soul of man, with all its load of new sorrows, struggles, and uncertainties, must pierce through the sheathing of marble. Was this possible, and, if so, to what extent? That was the question.

Unluckily, despite the learned researches of Milanesi, Semper, Cavallucci, and many other experts, we have no truly chronological list of all Donatello's works. Therefore, in order to avoid basing general considerations upon uncertain data in recording the principal periods of his artistic career, we will subdivide his works into groups, in their logical order of connection, and according to their difference of style, whenever their chronology seems doubtful. And all who study these groups will instantly recognise one of the leading characteristics of Donatello's artistic power. Unlike most of his contemporaries, the sole art he practised was sculpture. In this,

however, he essayed every possible method, and started a great number of different styles, so that all Renaissance sculpture seems centred, as it were, in Donatello and marked by his stamp. He had a many-sided, fertile, restless, and indomitable intelligence, that could never repeat itself, but must constantly tackle new difficulties.

One of the first works to afford us a clear perception of Donatello's individuality is his Annunciation, carved in *pietra serena*, in the church of Santa Croce. We see two simple figures in high relief. The traditional lily is absent; the Madonna's head is bare of its usual drapery; the folds of her robe no longer conceal the lines of her figure, but, on the contrary, accentuate them in a manner plainly derived from the study of ancient art.[1] Nor are the figures themselves of the ordinary and abstract type; a novel atmosphere of human feeling pervades the whole work, and the more closely one examines it, the more beauty and inner significance one discovers in it. The Virgin was sitting alone and reading. On the sudden appearance of the angel she was terrified and about to take flight; then, recognising the presence of a heavenly messenger, she as quickly turned towards him in a reverential attitude. All this is clearly expressed by her posture

[1] After throwing doubts on Donatello's second journey to Rome, of which documentary proofs have been discovered, some critics now express doubt about his first journey there; accordingly the Annunciation—showing so many signs of the sculptor's study of ancient art—is now attributed to a later period of his life. We, however, find no good reason for doubting a fact that Manetti and Vasari were the first to proclaim in their respective Lives of Brunelleschi, and that has since been confirmed by numerous other weighty authorities, Italian and foreign.

and the folds of her draperies. The angelic visitant, his wings still spread, has one knee bent to earth, while his outstretched right hand seems to accentuate the words one almost hears. Even the very stone seems to be palpitating, as though moved by strong feeling and thought. Above the tabernacle enshrining the scene are four child angels (*putti*), two on either side. But they are not placed there for mere ornament, but rather because they play a part in the general plan of the drama. Having noticed that something extraordinary was happening, they come rushing to see what it is. Then, alarmed by the height of their perch, they cling to one another for fear of falling off it. It is certain that this work brings us face to face at last with life and reality; a new art has leapt into existence!

This art plainly owes much to studies of antique models, but far more to the study of reality. All his life long Donatello incessantly pursued his quest for reality. Indeed, his contemporaries sometimes reproved him on that score. Brunelleschi, for instance, on seeing a crucifix his friend had just finished (the one in Santa Croce) instantly cried: "What! Thou hast put a *peasant* on the cross!" However, in all Donatello's later works it was easy to see the purpose he had in view. No one else would have dared to give us a Magdalen like the statue of her that still stands in the baptistry. Every one had depicted the beautiful sinner almost in the semblance of a Christian Venus. But Donatello preferred to show us a penitent worn out with fasting. Standing erect, with her hands clasped in prayer, her eyes turned to heaven, her body clad in skins, the fair woman is so emaciated by prolonged acts of penance that she might be an anatomical study. However—and this is what

proves the artist's originality—even in this state, the Magdalen has not lost all her beauty. The delicacy of her long, slender hands, the classical regularity of her wasted features, the exquisite lines of her limbs, seem to explain the history of her present sufferings and render her former charms more discernible. Another, but far more beautiful, statue of the same genre, and also of a later date, is Donatello's St. John the Baptist. This was one of his favourite themes, and he had treated it in many different ways. For instance, there is the beautiful St. John we have all admired in the palace of Donatello's patrons, the Martelli, to whom he gave it in sign of his lasting gratitude for their kindness. But now we must turn to his other St. John in the Florentine National Museum. The extraordinary leanness and nervous tension of this erect and solemn figure show the effect of prolonged abstinence on one who has dwelt in the wilderness with locusts and wild honey for his only food, unsheltered from sun, rain, or storm, and worked up to so high a pitch of religious enthusiasm that his soul seems to shine through his body and be expressed in the fervour with which he is studying the prophetic message on his scroll and apparently proclaiming it to the universe through his parted lips. Nothing could have withstood the force of so ardent a faith! This statue alone would suffice to prove Donatello the founder of modern sculpture, as also to prove how widely this diverges from the older school. Earnest study of form has finally succeeded in bringing before our eyes the true character and spirit of the individual portrayed.

That such result was only to be achieved by adhering to reality, or rather by continually recur-

ring to it, we have already asserted, and are perpetually finding fresh reasons for this belief. When Donatello was commissioned to execute his statue of David for the Cathedral belfry, he took for his model a certain Giovanni Cherichini, who was noted for his curiously expressive ugliness and closely shaven head.[1] He became so absorbed in this work that he quite forgot the appointed subject of it, and was solely bent on reproducing a real, living figure. He worked at it like a madman, dealing fierce blows with his chisel and crying, almost in the style of a modern Prometheus: "Speak, speak!" And the statue truly seems to be alive. On account of its apparent baldness the Florentines nicknamed it the "Pumpkin" (*Lo Zuccone*), and no one ever spoke of it as the David. Yet Donatello took such a fond pride in this work that he used to swear: "By my faith in my Zuccone." In the same spirit he filled the neighbouring niche with a statue that, according to some, was meant for King Solomon, and, according to others, for Jeremiah; but in fact was the portrait of Francesco Soderini, who was almost as ill-favoured as poor Cherichini. So the two Florentines stand side by side. The "Baldhead," with his long nose, half-opened mouth, pendent arms, and melancholy, downcast eyes, is draped in a cloak of which the majestic folds serve to enhance the effect of fixed sadness. On the other hand, the square-headed Soderini, with his strong, closely shut mouth, protruding lower lip, flat nose, big feet and big hands, is reading with an energetic attention that oddly

[1] This figure is always called "The Baldhead" because, being seen at a distance, it seems to be bald, but a nearer view of it shows us that the head is almost entirely covered with an extremely short stubble of hair.

contrasts with the weak, nerveless attitude of his neighbour the "Zuccone." A third statue of Donatello's in the same style, intended to represent one of the prophets, but really another study from life, is in the interior of the Duomo, and is doubtfully labelled with the name of Poggio Bracciolini. It is far more finished than the other two—although these are not the mere sketches they were once supposed to be—and is a marvellous study of expression. A fine, subtle irony seems to emanate from the whole form, and is also expressed by the position of the head, the lines of the mouth, and even by the shape of the hands. With these statues Donatello proved his right to be called the founder of the great Florentine school of portrait sculpture. Mino da Fiesole, Desiderio da Settignano and many others surpassed him in delicacy of finish, but no one had his power of expressing the character of his subjects in every line of their sculptured presentments. The organic unity of every individual is admirably grasped and rendered from head to foot.

The examination of one finger is enough to show to which model it belongs. Nature works in this way. So, knowing this, Donatello followed Nature's example. He is never photographic, but always creative, even when apparently copying exactly what he sees.

But it is not to be supposed that on first starting this new method of art Donatello overcame every difficulty at once and leapt to perfection. He was an explorer, a discoverer who attempted and failed before attaining to success. There are many inequalities in his works. Below some wonderfully realistic head you may occasionally find a stiff, lifeless arm reminiscent of the former style of sculpture, but

terminating in a hand of so much character as to be a true revelation of his genius. We may find a leg of perfect grace and truth to nature; yet see that the artist, in an excess of devotion to his subject, has overshot the mark by placing the other leg in a forced and unsuitable position. But the defective parts of the work serve to enhance the truthfulness of the rest, which renders the full freshness of impression produced by Nature upon man, at the latter's first awakening from mediæval asceticism: a freshness that cannot be felt and represented more than once with equal truth and spontaneity. It resembles the unexpected sight of a joyous dawn after the broken slumbers of a stormy night. In examining these works the historian is charmed with the contrasting elements he finds them to contain, and perceives how the new style is emerging from the old, and how grace, reality, and life are deserting the old, conventional world and putting an end to it for ever. He is watching the creation of modern art by the breath of Donatello's genius! But if the spectator be an artist he receives a different impression. His intelligence cannot remain passively contemplative. He sees how easy it would be to correct the faults of the works before his eyes, and only regards them as signs of haste or forgetfulness on the part of Donatello; and, as though inspired by the sculptor's genius, longs to snatch up a chisel and remedy those little mistakes. He discerns the fore-destined progress of art, and feels, as it were, the near approach of Michelangelo. Accordingly the artist gains more perhaps from the study of Donatello's works than from those of any other sculptor the world has produced.

In his three statues at Or San Michele, Donatello was moved by different and loftier ideas. The Saint Peter shows his old love of realism, but the grand poise of the Saint's head and the whole attitude of the figure show the force of a dominating will. One hand grasps the keys of heaven, and the eyes challenge the spectator as though calling him to account and deciding his fate. So we behold the creation of an historic figure. The St. Mark, produced somewhat later—between 1411 and 1413—is an embodiment of serenity. The Saint holds his book pressed to his bosom, his right hand hangs down, he appears to be gazing into space and absorbed in meditation. We behold in him the thinker and philosopher who observes and explains all the secrets of human nature. Michelangelo exclaimed, on seeing the statue: "I am certain this man can write a Gospel." These words contain the most accurate appreciation and likewise the highest praise of Donatello's art. But the San Giorgio was the work that surpassed all the rest. Its most striking point is intensity of expression combined with perfect quiescence. At first glance the motionless, mail-clad, bareheaded figure, standing stiffly erect, with the right hand resting on a shield, and draped with a carelessly hung cloak, makes little impression on us. But then the daring glance of the youthful eyes beneath the Saint's knitted brows betrays the smouldering fire within him, and we begin to realise the tempestuousness of his soul, and after studying every detail of the statue we finally understand Vasari's verdict, that never before had so much spirit been seen in stone. For here, in fact, is that terrible calm, the first manifestation of the tragic solemnity that was to be the fundamental element of Michelangelo's art. This

is why the critics have invariably acknowledged the close kinship of his David with the St. George of Donatello. On glancing at the base of this statue we discover a beautiful little bas-relief containing a spirited outline of the same warrior-saint in early youth in the act of slaying the dragon. He is now wearing his helmet, his cloak flutters in the wind, his spear has already pierced the monster's heart. Behind, with hands raised in prayer, and almost bowed to earth by fear and anxiety, stands the maiden whose life the Christian Perseus has saved.

II

We have noted how the beginning of the art of expression in sculpture may be traced to Donatello's Annunciation; that of character in sculpture to his Magdalen and St. John the Baptist; that of realistic portraiture to his statues on the Campanile; of historic sculpture to his works at Or San Michele. We must now mention other works of his in a totally different style. Donatello is considered by many critics to have been the inventor of the species of bas-relief technically designated as *stacciato* (flattened). It is maintained that by this kind of work he afforded great assistance to the celebrated school of Italian medallists that had been so successfully started by Pisanello at Verona. Certainly Donatello brought the genre to perfection, and employed it for some of his finest creations — including the famous Santa Cecilia. This bas-relief is so lightly traced that at some points it is scarcely thicker than a sheet of paper. One might describe it as the profile of a soul stamped on marble by some divine effort of genius.

The artist who had so zealously chiselled the expressive ugliness of Soderini and the Zuccone, now wished to show his keen sense of beauty. But in this work he gives us much more than mere perfection of line; for he also expresses the inspiring charm of purity and goodness. He also achieved the same end in the bas-relief of the Infant St. John that is now in the National Museum. For the beauty of this innocent little child most admirably expresses a precocious sense of his lofty mission. Thus the great artist always discovers and depicts the inner soul of his subject. Possibly, the ideal Virgins of Luca della Robbia may have been first suggested by those works; at any rate they seem to breathe forth the same celestial music. In our opinion the critic Perkins has clearly proved Luca's artistic relationship to Donatello, against the opposed theory of his affinity with Ghiberti.

At the beginning of 1425 Donatello entered on a fresh sphere of action. Conjointly with Michelozzo Michelozzi he started in Naples, Florence, Montepulciano, and elsewhere the series of grand monumental tombs that, being continued by later artists, adorned all our churches during the Renaissance. But it is needless to describe this scheme in detail, inasmuch as all the architectural part of the work was due to Michelozzi, Donatello contributing the sculptures alone. He had now resumed his study of ancient art with freshened zeal, as if to obtain new strength for mightier performances.

It was Donatello who induced Cosimo dei Medici to collect specimens of antique art, and who arranged and repaired them with his own hands, thus becoming the originator of those splendid Medician collections which have proved such useful factors in the history

of art and culture. Donatello then went to Rome for the second time, and executed various works there In Florence he carved the medallions on the peristyle of the Medici palace (now Palazzo Riccardi), for which he copied the designs from certain ancient coins and graven gems belonging to Cosimo, reproducing them so accurately that they were sometimes mistaken for Greek or Roman work. It was probably at this period that he produced his splendid David in bronze. This, the first nude statue of the Renaissance, was undoubtedly inspired by and studied from ancient art, although its modern origin is plainly shown in the arrangement and character of the head.

But his most individual and original work at this period consisted in what may be called the sculpture, or indeed the poetry, of childhood. The Middle Ages were too severe and grim to allow much space to child-nature in their art, while the ancient world had been itself too spontaneous to recognise the full poetic value of the theme. The modern spirit, on the contrary, discovers in the innocence of childhood the joyous harmony lacking to itself, and accordingly feels the fascination of it. Donatello spent a good portion of his life in studying children's ways. Their perfect freedom of movement, their ready smiles, the rapid changes of countenance with which they often express some unexpected depth of thought or feeling, afforded him the greatest delight, and his chisel has bequeathed to us a countless number of infantine forms. The first to appear were the little peeping boys on the tabernacle of the Annunciation. Donatello's children abound in Florence, Padua, Faenza, and other parts of Italy. This one laughs, another muses or expresses surprise, some dance, while others are singing or playing. Every affection, every feeling has its separate expression,

according to the child's age, which is always defined in the most masterly way. Donatello was the first to trace in stone that psychology of the child of which philosophers have only discovered the value at the present day, finding that it serves to teach us the origin of mind and the birth of conscience.

It was in this second period of his life that Donatello completed the two great works which deserve to be called his poems of childhood, namely, the Pulpit at Prato and the Singing Gallery intended for the Florence Cathedral. These works represent two crowds of juvenile musicians who are playing and singing in the most varied attitudes, jumping up and down, clasping hands, clinging together, pushing one another this way and that, laughing and tumbling about. Even here we find some defects of design, certain attitudes and gestures inappropriate to childhood—the forced smile, for instance, on some of the faces; but these merely act as foils to the indescribable freshness and innocence of the other figures, who seem to be leading back Italian art, by untrodden ways, to the spontaneousness and harmony of ancient Greece. As these works were to be placed at a height from the ground, Donatello had so carefully employed the required foreshortenings, effects of perspective, and roughly sketched outlines, that when placed at the due elevation all beholders agreed that his sculptured children (*putti*) seemed really living and moving. Unfortunately, the Chantry was taken away from its proper site, and is now raised so little above the spectator's eyes as to lose part of its original charm.[1] The companion singing gallery, by Luca della Robbia, who had neglected to foreshorten his figures, has benefited, on the contrary, by the change

[1] In the hall of the Opera del Duomo.

of position. When placed at the intended height, Luca's figures seemed lifeless and sketchy, but have now gained as much as the more scientific work of Donatello has lost.

In 1444 our sculptor inaugurated the third period of his career by new and still more daring achievements. On being invited to Padua to execute a colossal equestrian statue to the memory of Erasmo Gattamelata, the famous Free Captain, he immediately obeyed the summons and set to work at once on this truly gigantic undertaking, which, as Muntz has remarked, has an artistic importance only comparable with that of Brunelleschi's dome. In fact, on recalling the small, roughly carved equestrian statues of the Trecento, often consisting of a knightly form encased in armour and a horse with trailing accoutrements entirely hiding its limbs, one can realise the difficulties which had to be coped with in those days. Later on, a few bolder and more monumental designs had been executed, but only in wood or as mural paintings. However, Donatello set to work with his usual energy. He had seen the horses of St. Mark's in Venice and the Marcus Aurelius in Rome; nevertheless, he had now not only to attempt the revival of a lost art, but also to discover the—then unknown—method of casting a colossal mass in bronze. He was marvellously successful in rendering the posture of a mounted knight at the moment of giving the signal to charge. The modelling of the horse is far from perfect, but the animal is full of life and tingling with impatience. So, after many years of untiring labour, the sculptor produced so marvellous a work that, as Vasari happily says, it amazed all the world. And it certainly suggested the idea of the equestrian statue of Colleoni, afterwards designed and modelled

by Verrocchio, but finished by the hand of Alessandro Leopardo. These two great works are the only masterpieces achieved during the Renaissance in this particular branch of art. If we remember how many equestrian statues, even by skilled artists, have proved utter failures in our own times, our admiration for Donatello's stupendous work will be all the more increased, seeing that it was the first of the kind to be produced since the days of Greece and Rome.

For the performance of his truly tremendous task at Padua he was obliged to employ many young assistants, who became his disciples and spread their master's fame throughout Northern Italy, where his influence affected even artists of the brush, and especially Mantegna, whose pictures show visible traces of Donatello's method in art. Our sculptor's influence on painting is to be attributed to the numerous and very beautiful bas-reliefs he produced, besides several statues for the Paduan church of St. Antonio, in which his extraordinary dramatic power is abundantly displayed. These bas-reliefs represent scenes of the Saint's life. They lack the depth of perspective shown in Ghiberti's second doors, nor, as in those, are the different episodes of a subject carried on to the neighbouring pieces with equal care. They are crowded with figures, but instead of being arranged solely with a view to picturesqueness, they invariably serve to develop the *leit motif* of the scene. Thus the unity of the composition is maintained, and the spectator can seize it at first glance, just as the artist's creative mind had conceived it in a single flash of thought. The picturesque element is there, but only as the necessary adjunct and result of the drama from which it proceeds, but upon which it is never arbitrarily imposed. The architectural details are

derived from the North Italian buildings Donatello had before his eyes at the time, and they form admirable backgrounds to his personages. In one of these bas-reliefs we see the Saint in the act of cutting open the body of a dead miser to show that he had a stone where his heart should have been, and that his heart was enclosed in his money chest.[1] What varied passions are roused in the crowd of spectators by the sight! Some are eagerly looking on, others kneeling; one old man seems stupefied, while a youth, frenzied with excitement, beats his head on the ground. Others have mounted on a stool to get a better view of the scene, and are greedily gazing at it, while clinging to each other for fear of losing their foothold. Frightened women are running away, children are hiding their eyes in their mothers' skirts.

The same qualities, together with the same dramatic powers, are to be found in the other bas-reliefs completed by Donatello during this period. One of these, close to the high altar, represents four disciples reverently laying their crucified Master in the tomb, while four others are plunged in a passion of grief. Donatello has repeated this subject with a larger number of figures in his bas-relief at the Ambras Gallery in Vienna. Three tearful disciples are carefully lowering the Saviour's inanimate form, while a fourth holds His right hand, and presses his lips to it. Others show their despair by raising their hands to heaven or beating their breasts. The Virgin lies swooning in the arms of her companion, who seems

[1] In reality, this bas-relief includes two distinct episodes of the same story, and Donatello has adopted this method more than once. But the discovery of the miser's heart in his coffer is represented in a corner of the bas-relief, which is almost entirely devoted to the principal theme.

hardly able to support her. A terrified child is escaping through the crowd. In contrast to this display of emotion is the cold, marble Roman tomb, decorated with a scene of ancient festivity, showing a horse and chariot at full speed, preceded and followed by hurrying forms. One may assuredly assert that in these works Donatello, who was already advanced in years, showed a flash of Shakespearian genius. And many other examples of this might be recalled. The South Kensington Museum possesses one of them in his half-length figure of Christ painfully supported by the diminutive hands of two little angels, one of whom is hastily wiping his eyes with his disengaged left hand. In the background are other angelic forms, so lightly traced as to seem little more than shadowy shapes and visions of despair. In conclusion we may mention Donatello's "Martyrdom of St. Sebastian," now in Paris. The martyr's body, bound to a column with cords, is straining forward; the anatomy of his bust is plainly discerned, not only by reason of the Saint's past privations, but also from the contraction caused by the torture he is enduring. Several of the arrows in his breast have pierced him through and through. Facing him at a very short distance, two of his executioners are again stretching their bows. An angel is hovering over the martyr and murmuring words of good cheer, while pointing upwards, as if to say, "Behold, thy pain will soon be ended there!"

By 1454 Donatello was beginning to feel the burden of his years, and resolved to return to his own city, alleging that whereas in Padua he would be finally lulled to sleep by exaggerated praise, in Tuscany the sharp criticism of his fellow Florentines would certainly keep him wide awake. In fact, notwith-

standing his advanced age, in 1457 we find him undertaking many fresh works in Siena and afterwards in Florence, including the pulpits for the church of San Lorenzo, although these had to be finished by another hand. There is reason to believe that he completed his Judith (now in the Loggia dei Lanzi) about this time. But while all these works are of high merit, they need not be described here. Donatello had ceased to explore new paths in art, and some signs of the feebleness of age may be detected in these later productions. His bas-reliefs now became overcrowded with figures and too complicated architectural details. In his picturesque and very beautiful Judith group, the two figures are placed too close together. The attitude of Holofernes is forced; the vindictive heroine brandishes the weapon that is to cut off his head in a very feeble manner, while the joyous, frolicsome child-forms on the pedestal clash with the tragedy represented above.

Donatello was over eighty years of age when he passed away in 1466, leaving Italy full of his works. But, naturally, we have only been able to mention those of most importance. No other artist had worked so untiringly: and what is more, no one had opened so many new paths in art. His faithful rendering of human passions, his characteristic and truthful portraiture, his historical statues, his ideal of Christian beauty and the poetry of childhood, of monumental and equestrian sculpture, tragic solemnity and dramatic conflict of feeling, were all styles that he created, introduced and made practicable in the modernised art of statuary of which he was truly the pioneer. During the Renaissance this remained a Tuscan art and was deeply stamped with the Donatellian spirit, of which some traces may be

discerned in the genius of Michelangelo, who always acknowledged Donatello as his master. When Borghini made the rather exaggerated declaration: "Either the spirit of Donatello lives in Michelangelo, or that of Michelangelo already lived in Donatello," he did not express a purely personal opinion. Vasari had always said the same, and it was echoed by Cellini and many others. We have another proof of this in the general recognition of the close relationship between Michelangelo's David and Donatello's St. George, as well as in the resemblance selected by many between Donatello's St. John the Evangelist and Michelangelo's Moses. At first view, in fact, one perceives a general similarity of line between these two works, although they represent very different ideas. St. John is a visionary, sitting plunged in quiet meditation; while Moses is the living embodiment of a strong-willed, powerful lawgiver. Nevertheless, on examining the early works of Michelangelo we can plainly trace their derivation. But he infused greater homogeneity and harmony into Donatello's new art by stripping it of the inequalities of its original form. Also, as soon as he had mastered this novel method, he neglected realistic portraiture and no longer reproduced the model before his eyes. His gigantic intellect at once created a race of Titans who conquered the realm of art, in which they will reign for ever. At sight of them our mind seems to be forcibly transported to a loftier region and brought face to face with the mighty genius who claims our ecstatic admiration. Donatello's works, on the other hand, lead us to nature, the primal source and constant inspiration of his art. For Donatello seems to hold our hand in a friendly grasp, to show us all the difficulties he encountered, to point

out where he failed, where he finally succeeded, and then to urge us to go on farther. He had discovered the world that Michelangelo was to conquer; he began what the latter has finished, thus closing a period of which in Donatello one sees the beginning and divines the destined advance.

So long as Italian art remained fettered by academical rules, Donatello was forgotten. When art seemed confused with photography, Donatello was seen but not understood. But when artists began to realise the necessity of seeking inspiration from nature, and above all that art has to be created by the human brain for the improvement and spiritualisation of mankind, then indeed "the departed spirit returned to us" ("L'ombra sua torna, ch'era dipartita").

We have made acquaintance with Donatello the sculptor, but what do we know of the man himself? Very little, unfortunately, yet enough to show us what he was. He was a truly good man, and hard work was his only joy. He had neither wife nor child, but supported his old mother and sister and always lived with them. He spent his earnings in so generous a fashion that it was related of him by his friends that he threw all his money into a basket hung up in his studio, allowing his pupils and intimates to help themselves to what they wanted. Even if this tale be deemed fabulous, it serves to show that he was esteemed for his generosity by all who knew him well. At any rate, it has been ascertained that, in order to prevent his work from being interrupted for lack of funds, his employers often thought it best to pay him by the week. At one time, when his fame was at the highest, he was called before the magistrates to declare the amount of his property. Whereupon he frankly replied: "I have no property

at all, excepting some furniture and household gear: I have certain debts I cannot pay, and some money is owing to me that I shall never receive." The frugality of his habits was equally exceptional. Cosimo de' Medici, seeing how poorly he was clothed, presented him with a new coat and a crimson mantle. But, after trying them on once or twice, Donatello gave them back to the donor, saying that "they made him feel too grandly dressed." Later on, Pietro de' Medici gave him a house with a little farm attached to it. But the sculptor quickly returned this gift also, praying to be allowed to enjoy his former freedom: "For now, first comes the contadino to complain that the wind has torn the roof off the dovecot; next that the tax gatherer has confiscated the cattle; then that the hailstorm has ruined the corn and the vines. This is no life for me! An artist cannot play the landlord." Accordingly, Pietro de' Medici took back the house and land, giving him in exchange a small weekly allowance. The concluding years of his life passed drearily enough, for he was entirely alone, and being afflicted with paralysis, was unable to work. He still possessed some property he had almost forgotten, consisting of a cottage and scrap of garden at Prato, worth twenty-three florins. So some distant relations appeared and pressed him to make a will bequeathing it to them. "I am sorry," replied Donatello, "but I must leave that scrap of land to the poor peasant who has worked on it all his life and watered it with the sweat of his brow." So the contadino became his heir. Here we are brought face to face with the final problem of Donatello's life. How is it that this great initiator of Italian art, who has left so indelible a stamp upon it—that this man who led so stainless a life, was so generous

and affectionate to his pupils and friends, so devoted to his mother and to art—should have been able to give an almost unique example of virtuous living in the days of the Italian Renaissance? Was it not the age of the Sforzas, Malatestas and Borgias? Are we not perpetually told that this was the age of shameless self-seeking, of dagger and poison, of intrigue and treachery?—the time when our manners were corrupted, even the ties of family profaned, and when Italians jeered at all that in their comedies and tales? Are we not taught that this is precisely the reason why every true ideal, and (according to those teachers) all genuine inwardness and subjectivity of conscience had become impossible among us? But might we not be allowed to ask: How was it that this age of horrors should have given birth to Donatello's Santa Cecilia and other immortal fruits of his brain, to the Saints of Frà Beato Angelico and Benozzo Gozzoli, to the grand works of Luca Signorelli, the Virgins of Luca della Robbia, and a host of similar creations, ending later on with the severely tragic and solemn forms of Michelangelo Buonarotti? For are not these productions the purest, holiest, most ideal conceptions ever born of human brain? Whence did they come? Are they not the very pith of the Italian spirit?

It is true that corruption was rife at that period, and exceedingly rife in Italy; but it was chiefly confined to the upper classes, upon whom the attention of historians is usually fixed;—to statesmen, diplomats, mercenary leaders, and the swarms of courtiers who buzzed about them like importunate wasps to obtain payment for the flatteries they lavished on all persons of importance. But on ransacking the archives for information concerning the humbler

ranks of society, one finds records of silent, laborious folk who still retained purity of feeling. There were mothers leading secluded domestic lives whose talk with their children seems to bring before our eyes the pious conceptions depicted by our artists. One perceives that a good part of the nation was still unpolluted, still possessed of the original qualities forming the basis of the free institutions which were destroyed in the fifteenth century. The deepest thinker of that age was cognisant of this when, in deploring the corruption of the Italian priests, politicians and parties, he maintained that the people were still virtuous and strong, and when praying for the future redemption of Italy, earnestly cried, "Raise the banner, call the *people* to arms, and you will see!" And his prophecy has been fulfilled in our own days. But the princes of the Renaissance distrusted the people, and put all their faith in the mercenary bands who brought them destruction and the country ruin. So Machiavelli's cry was unheeded at the time, and calumny was heaped on his name for three centuries.

History likewise teaches us that most of our Renaissance artists were sons of the people, and despite their eccentricities—of which too much has been said—preserved an honest rectitude of feeling that enhanced the purity of their intellectual creations—a fact that has been too slightly remarked. For what blame can history or tradition attach to the life of men such as Beato Angelico, of whom it is related that he so deeply despised riches and honours as to prefer doing unpaid work, almost as though he feared that gold would desecrate his art? We are also told that Frà Bartolommeo threw aside his brushes on imagining that his painting was becoming sensual; told that Donatello went through the world

like a visionary mystic, worked from morning to night with empty pockets, while he was creating a multitude of beautiful forms which even now seem to hover near us and impress us with their beneficent influence. Then, do we not know how Michelangelo neglected important commissions in order to nurse an old and devoted servant who was slowly dying? Also that he was the most devoted of sons, the truest of friends, and the defender of Florentine freedom on the ramparts of San Miniato? The corrupt and debasing comedies of the Renaissance were not written by our artists, nor, so far as we know, did one of them profane brush or chisel with any work of that nature. So the art they created, besides being the manifestation of all that remained healthiest in the Italian people, also sowed good seed for the future, and, hand in hand with literature and science, greatly helped to render Italian civilisation a necessary instrument for the civilisation of the world.

History has no call to preach morality. Yet if there be any lesson constantly learnt from its pages, it is, that whenever it treats of any truly great deed, we may trace almost always the origin of that deed to some honest man's sense of duty. All the prominent men of the Renaissance were full of talent, but when they became corrupt, their talent only served for the work of destruction. Our shrewd, subtle, inventive diplomats and statesmen only made themselves and their country a prey to foreign rule. It was the men devoted to truth and disinterested labour, earnest seekers of the ideal, who, amid the general decadence, sowed the seed of the future. The honour now paid to Donatello, by leading us to study the origin of the new art and learning of our Renaissance period, serves to enforce the lesson, perpetually incul-

cated by history, that no truly great work can be produced either in art or in science without the aid of a lofty moral sense and a firmly rooted belief that man is born to live for others and can only find happiness in the good of others. Also that he is created in such wise that everything unsanctioned by duty in his moral and intellectual life is unholy and foredoomed to decay.

This is the conclusion we may draw even from the life and works of our good Donatello.

GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA AND THE PRESENT DAY

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The Martyrdom of Savonarola and his Disciples

From a painting by an unknown Florentine of the sixteenth century.

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GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA AND THE PRESENT DAY

It would be superfluous to enlarge on the life and works of Savonarola to a Florentine audience so familiar with the theme. But I would call your attention as Italians to a question connected with Savonarola that is not merely of historical interest, but also of moral and religious importance with regard to the existing conditions of the national spirit.

First of all, How is it that the shade of Savonarola should seem to have suddenly risen from the grave in response to a general appeal? Books, pamphlets, special numbers even, dedicated to his memory are now being published on all sides. As far back as 1703 the custom of scattering flowers on the site of his martyrdom was already abandoned; but since 1897 the old demonstration of sympathy has been continually renewed. There must be some reason for this.

Also, a second question occurs in connection with the first—How comes it that many of those who thus pay honour to the memory of Savonarola are moved by such varied, indeed, often contradictory, motives? The Protestants have delivered a lecture, published a special number and programme to the effect that "Savonarola is one of us. That the Roman Catholics are wholly mistaken in venturing to claim

as one of themselves the man who so bravely opposed the Pope, and at the command of that Pope was condemned to death, hanged, burnt at the stake, and his ashes cast into the Arno." The Catholics contradict this, and inquire, How can the term "Protestant" be applied to a man who was worshipped as a saint by St. Filippo Neri and St. Caterina dei Ricci, judged worthy of veneration by Pope Benedict XIV.; a man who celebrated Mass to his last hour, performed every function of the Catholic faith, worshipped the Saints, urged men to pray for the release of sinners from purgatory, and wept on being stripped of his religious garb before mounting the scaffold? What more could he have done to prove himself a true and devout Catholic? Indeed, there is a very little to be said in reply to this. Nevertheless, it is a positive fact that Martin Luther himself, the fittest of all men to distinguish Protestants from Catholics, numbered Savonarola among the precursors of the Reformation. The same view was maintained by most of his German biographers, Rudelbach and Meier included. Recently, too, on the national German monument erected to Luther at Worms, we see Savonarola represented at the great reformer's feet beside Jerome of Prague, John Huss, and Wickliff.

This was not done by chance, nor without exciting remark. Catholics in general, and the Dominicans in particular, loudly protested against this juxtaposition. But the fact remains, and demands consideration.

Yet this conflict of opinion would be easier to understand if it only raged between Catholics and Protestants, between friends and foes of the papacy. But, in point of fact, even Catholics disagree as to the verdict to be passed on Savonarola. A short

time ago the friars of St. Mark wished to bring out a complete edition of his works, arranged for a series of lectures in honour of his quatercentenary, and hoped to obtain his sanctification. On the other hand, the *Civiltà Cattolica* [1] published a series of articles in which Savonarola was severely blamed. Also, the distinguished German scholar, Professor Pastor, of the Catholic University at Innsbruck, gives a detailed account of Savonarola in his recent and learned "History of the Popes," harshly and openly condemning him for disobeying the orders received from Rome and refusing submission to the decree of excommunication. Thereupon Professor Luotto, of Faenza, was moved to attack Pastor's views with the zeal of a neophyte by writing a big volume in Savonarola's defence. And the enthusiastic young author worked at such high pressure, in order to have his book published in time for the approaching quatercentenary of his hero, that he died of exhaustion soon after he had written the last page of his work. All this would seem to indicate that the question demands careful study, unbiassed by party spirit or theological prejudice, and under the searchlight of historical criticism, for the sole purpose of arriving at the truth of the matter.

This is the task I would now attempt. But, first of all, let me recall to your memory certain dates in Savonarola's life. Born at Ferrara in 1452, he assumed the Dominican robe at Bologna in 1475. In 1481 he came to Florence, stayed there, with intervals of absence, to 1489, and was thenceforth a fixture in his Florentine convent. He was soon at odds with Lorenzo dei Medici and his Court, and also with many of the humanists and schoolmen who

[1] The well-known organ of the Jesuits in Rome.

enjoyed that Prince's patronage: In 1494 Charles VIII. of France marched into Florence, the Medici were expelled, the Republic was established, and Savonarola adhered to the free government. Thereupon he suddenly gained so enormous an influence over the mass of the Florentines that he almost seemed to dictate from his pulpit the new laws and constitution then established in the city. He had announced in his sermons that the deluge was at hand, that a stranger, "a new Cyrus," would descend upon Italy; accordingly, when Charles VIII. appeared as a conqueror at the head of his army, all Florence felt convinced that the friar of St. Mark's was a true prophet. Then, in the full tide of his popularity, after the political reformation was effected, he could triumphantly undertake the moral reformation of Florence. When, however, the scandalous conduct of Pope Alexander VI. and his children became more and more notorious in Italy, and roused a formidable outcry of indignation, Savonarola, justly believing that all this was doing incalculable injury to morality and religion, was finally stirred to make hot protest against it from the pulpit, by denouncing in thinly veiled terms the scandalous doings of the Pope and his clergy in Rome. So from day to day the discord between Alexander Borgia and the preacher of St. Mark's became more inflamed. At last, when the latter had been vainly ordered to keep silence, the Bull of excommunication was launched against him on the 13th of May, 1497, but he refused to submit to it and continued to preach, saying that the Pope had been misinformed, that his sermons were needed for the restoration of morality and the diffusion of the evangelic doctrines which it was his duty, as a priest, to proclaim and enforce.

Thereupon discord broke out in Florence, and grew more and more heated. Before long Savonarola's position in the city was entirely changed, and his enormous popularity rapidly disappeared. He had made one mistake in the course of his career that was bound to be fatal to him, though he never clearly realised it. He was an ardent champion of free government, believing that freedom would promote the chief aim he had in view, *i.e.*, the triumph of morality and religion. The Florentines, on the contrary, whose religious feelings had long become blunted, were only favourable to religious reform because they hoped it would insure the success of their republic. They aimed at a political victory, Savonarola at the triumph of religion. Therefore he and they were only in accord as long as the pursuit of the one object helped that of the other. But when the violent opposition of the Pope was added to that of the Medici and their adherents and of Lodovico Sforza of Milan, and, consequently, their republic was endangered by Savonarola's deeds, his Florentine admirers became his foes and left him to his fate. Thus he was doomed to fall a victim to the Borgian Pope, who condemned him to death, and on the 13th of May, 1498, his ashes were thrown into the Arno.

The lofty praises accorded to Savonarola by Francesco Guicciardini and other contemporaries of the same stamp sufficiently prove his historical value. "The Florentines," Guicciardini writes, "owe a vast debt to this friar, who knew how to hold them in check during the Revolution, thus preventing the populace from committing excesses which would have provoked a reaction and endangered the freedom secured to them by his efforts." A statement of this

kind, made by an extremely talented man, who had no great faith in religion, no love for priests or friars, and was in nowise addicted to fantastic enthusiasms, is undoubtedly a most valuable piece of evidence. The same may be said of the testimony afforded by Francesco Nardi and Donato Giannotti, two of the purest and most daring of Florentine patriots, and who invariably spoke of Savonarola with the highest admiration. Even the French chronicler, Philippe de Commines, the shrewdest foreign diplomat of the period, visited Savonarola in his cell and formed the highest opinion of him. "His adversaries," he wrote, "charge this friar with having prophesied things which he had previously learnt from others; but he told me of certain things that no one could have known about and that afterwards came true." We are bound to believe that witnesses of this kind were better fitted than all others to judge the personal merit of the friar apart from the religious question. Nevertheless, even on this point Savonarola has had many fierce opponents.

Many literary men, many philosophers and historians are strongly averse to him, and declare they have no patience with so fantastic a visionary. I remember that a clever author who was an intimate friend of mine was moved to write to me, after chancing to read some of the doggrel hymns of the Piagnoni [1]:— "When I look at this rubbish and find that the Piagnoni danced through the Florence streets, chanting verses of that sort, I frankly confess that had I been standing near the pile prepared for Savonarola, possibly *I* might have helped to set it ablaze, in order to make an end of that fanatic." And another learned friend exclaimed with equal heat: "How can one feel any

[1] The Piagnoni were rigid followers of Savonarola's doctrines.

admiration for a man who, amid the splendours of the Renaissance, during the golden age of literature, of art, and of the emancipation of human reason, tried to thrust Florence, the brilliant centre of all this culture, back into the barbarism of the Middle Ages, and positively turned it into a monkery? Only a blind reactionary who could not understand his own period would have burnt illustrated copies of the 'Decameron' and works of art. He managed, for a moment, to change the Florentines into downright idiots. Why ought we to admire him?"

I should like, however, to ask all who speak of Savonarola in this fashion:—Had you chanced to be at Assisi when St. Francis, in order to prove his love of poverty, walked stark naked through a great crowd of men and women, to give back his clothes to his father, or when the Saint also appeared half stripped in the pulpit, and trod the public roads in the same condition, calling on his brother the wolf and his sister the moon, while gutter children ran at his heels, shouting, "The madman, the madman!"—what you would have said then! Logically speaking, you ought to have joined the pack of yelling children and stigmatised as a fool and a lunatic the man who was undoubtedly one of the noblest characters in all the history of Italy, and who succeeded in lighting a flame of enthusiasm throughout the length and breadth of the land; the man who won the admiration of Dante and inspired some of his finest verses, who also gave inspiration to Giotto, and infused Umbria with such pure religious feeling as to make it the birthplace of a new school of Christian art, that has peopled not only Italy, but all Europe, with fresh and enduring types of ideal loveliness. The fact is that religious phenomena are

not to be judged according to scientific or literary standards. It would be the same as trying to distinguish colours by the ear or sounds by the eye. The two phenomena being of an essentially different nature, they must be examined and judged from a different point of view. Savonarola was decidedly one of those who place conscience above science and must therefore be judged by the standard of conscience. Then, as to the question of Savonarola having wished to throw us back into the barbarism, superstition, and darkness of the Middle Ages, when we were already in the Renaissance, the age of art, science, light, and free-thought, I should like to see things estimated at their true value. In consequence of our hostility to the Church we have been led to write the history of Italy in such an excessively anti-papal spirit that much confusion has been caused thereby. For instance, I consider it a gross exaggeration to represent the Middle Ages as a period of darkness and barbarism compared with the Renaissance period of true enlightenment and civilization. I would ask my hearers to tell me whether the human mind has ever produced anything finer or more sublime than the Gothic cathedrals erected throughout Europe during the Middle Ages? The free governments established in the Middle Ages were destroyed in the Renaissance. The mediæval victory of Legnano drove back across the Alps the foreign foes to whom the men of the Renaissance granted free passage from one end of Italy to the other. The Middle Ages concluded with that noblest creation of the human brain, the "Divina Commedia." The Middle Ages undoubtedly possessed a strong religious faith that the Renaissance did its best to destroy and almost succeeded

in destroying. Consequently some foreign historians, often too ready to judge the whole of our history by the deeds of the Renaissance, instead of stating that Italians lost their faith in religion at that period, positively declared that the Italian people were naturally irreligious and had no truly Christian ideals. And we not only believed what those writers told us, but even boasted of it, from a mistaken feeling of patriotism. Such was the erroneous verdict pronounced on the people that founded the Catholic Church; founded those religious orders of St. Benedict, St. Francis, and St. Dominic which exercised such enormous influence throughout the civilised world; the people that had owned a series of Popes and prelates such as Leo I., Gregory the Great, and St. Ambrose, who, whether considered from the religious, historic, or psychological point of view, certainly do honour to the human race. Also which people was it that gave birth to Christian art?

Undoubtedly one of the strangest facts on record is the thorough and startling transformation of the Italian spirit between Dante's day and that of Boccaccio, albeit those writers were almost contemporaries. Church and State were in open discord; science had begun to sap faith and to war against religion. Nevertheless, two different currents were manifested in the Renaissance period. There was the pagan current that copied classic antiquity, looked to earth instead of to heaven, and studied the realities of life. But there was likewise a pious and Christian current that has left many visible traces in the literature and art of the time. Assuredly none can deny that the paintings of Beato Angelico, the St. Cecilia of Donatello, and the Virgins of Luca della Robbia afford the plainest proofs of the existence of the

purest, most ideal Christian spirit in the days of the Renaissance. Nor can it be denied that even the men of learning had a presentiment that if their imitation of pagan thought were carried too far all the religious principles in which they themselves had been trained would be completely demolished, and accordingly felt that these should not be rejected outright. This fact not only explains the numerous attempts of Ficino and others at that time to reconcile paganism with Christianity, but likewise explains why Savonarola found so many admirers and followers among the learned men, and why Pico della Mirandola and even Poliziano ended by wishing to be buried at St. Mark's in the garb of Dominican monks. It was the force of the pagan current that contributed to our literature the series of comedies that reached their climax later on in Machiavelli's "Mandragola." This play not only contains a scene in which every virtuous feeling is derided, but also shows us a mother who, within the walls of a church and with the aid of a friar, urges her daughter to commit adultery. And when the pair finally conquer the young woman's scruples they give thanks to the Lord for the good deed they have done! Can we wonder, then, that Savonarola—although he was the friend of many scholars and artists and had saved from destruction many MSS. of the Laurentian Library—should have been moved to wrath by writings of that kind, and indignantly declared that it would be better to give such books to the flames? Have we not at the present day often desired the same fate for works of much science but too scant morality?

Savonarola had also to face another grave question of historical importance. Mediæval society was

falling to pieces, the unity of the Empire was melting away; nationality and the modern State were in process of formation. The slackening of piety diminished the power of the Church, who could no longer wield her former authority over the new and independent principalities which were springing up on all sides. Hence she began to see the necessity of erecting a temporal power—the States of the Church. Consequently, the Popes of the fifteenth century were dragged into all the shady intrigues of contemporary Italian politics; they became veritable potentates and tyrants, similar to those who were crushing free communes all over the country; they had recourse to the same reprehensible and sanguinary measures. Thus, going on from worse to worse, there came a Sixtus IV., an Innocent VIII., and an Alexander VI., who brought the evil to a head. For the Borgian Pope committed atrocities which excited enormous scandal and almost horror even in that corrupt and shameless age. Nor at the present time is the slightest doubt retained on this score by the most ardently Catholic writers. Even Professor Pastor, whose recent history is written in defence of the Papacy, feels compelled to avow, when confronted by documentary evidence such as the original Brief of 1501, in which Alexander VI., who had been elected Pope in 1492, decreed the legitimacy of Giovanni Borgia, his own three-year-old child, that, in the presence of facts such as these, it is impossible to say a word in his defence. It was in consequence of similar and even more horrible facts, which were daily increasing, becoming more openly scandalous and swollen by public rumour, brought closer to the ears of all Italy by private correspondence and ambassadorial

reports, that Savonarola was driven to protest against these infamies. He began by broadly hinting at them in the pulpit and uttering horrified denunciations. When ordered to keep silence, he refused to obey. When the Bull of excommunication was served on him, he still continued to preach, and made appeal to the Council. "I preach morality," he said, "virtuous living and gospel truth. My silence would do injury to doctrines that the Pope cannot condemn and has not condemned." This is the starting point of all the disputes on the subject. Some declare, in justification of Savonarola, that he was not positively excommunicated, and therefore not really contumacious. Others, on the contrary, maintain that the command to keep silence and the Bull of excommunication had duly arrived, wherefore, according to the rules of canonical law, he should have desisted from preaching, and deserves blame for failing to do so. This is not the moment to enter into the minute technical details of the question; but it is certain that both the order to keep silence and the decree of excommunication were duly received and that Savonarola continued to preach. But I may add that if we look to the substance rather than to the form of the matter at issue we shall find that, even in the account given by Savonarola's foes of the dramatic episode of the 23rd of May, 1498, the just man is seen to be the victim of the unjust. Such being the case, it seems to me that canonical law may be left to take care of itself, and that from the moral and conscientious point of view Savonarola's action was thoroughly justified.

It is easy to allege that the wickedness of the Pope does not impair his authority; cannot impair the efficacy of his doctrine; cannot injure the Church,

which remained unalterable, as a pure diamond remains even when set in base metal. According to this comparison, the pure diamond would be the Church and her doctrine; the base metal, Alexander VI. This, in fact, was what Savonarola meant by calling the Pope "a broken tool." As to doing no harm to religion, it was precisely the wickedness of certain fifteenth-century Popes, and most of all the crimes of the Borgian Pope, that chiefly destroyed religious feeling in Italy. To respect the authority of written law is certainly a sacred duty; but as John Stuart Mill has remarked, numerous crimes have been committed in the name of the letter of the law and of purely formal legality.

Socrates, the justest man known to the ancients, was sentenced to the deadly draught of hemlock in the name of the law. Also the worst crime in all human history was committed on Mount Calvary in the name of the law!

Savonarola lived at a critical period of the world's history. He clearly discerned, and with a truly prophetic eye, that the state of Italian affairs, the evil deeds and corruption of the Pope and the clergy, had reached to such a pitch as to threaten the total ruin of Church and State. Accordingly some reform of the Church was indispensably required. Unless initiated by the Church herself, it would be accomplished from without, and thus destroy the unity of the Church. Being resolved to do his utmost to avert that calamity, he clung to the idea of an internal reformation that would ensure the safety of the Church's doctrines, and foresaw future disasters unless that reform were speedily undertaken. His voice, however, was stifled in blood; Luther's Reformation gained the victory,

the unity of the Christian Church was destroyed, and Italy was scourged as Savonarola had predicted.

Here, therefore, we have the origin of the varied appreciations of Savonarola's character, and likewise arrive at the explanation of them. The Protestants who found him preaching in favour of reform, at a moment when the champions of the internal reform of the Church and those seeking reform beyond the pale of Catholicism but not yet come to open separation, unanimously cried: "This man is one of us; he is one of Luther's precursors!" They failed to reflect that Savonarola was starting his reform for the express purpose of averting the reformation promoted by Luther. Those Catholics who even now yearn to unite all Christians in the same fold, under one and the same shepherd, and desire to see the Church in harmony with the State, with freedom and the fatherland, and sanctified by religion, proclaim Savonarola a prophet and martyr, and would fain proclaim him a saint. But the other sort of Catholics, who wish, on the contrary, to convert the Church and religion into a political party, who seek to keep the Church at enmity with Italy, and who constantly refuse all free discussion, as being opposed to the authority of an ever infallible Pope, all declare Savonarola to be a rebel, and from their point of view are justified in so doing.

As we have already said, the consequences of the triumph of Savonarola's foes were exactly those he had predicted. Both morally and politically Italy was scourged to the bone, was subjected to every kind of ill-treatment, which being continued during four centuries, brought us to the condition we have remained in to this day. It was the religious sense above all that became steadily weakened among us. In this

respect, indeed, we have arrived at a condition that is sometimes not only opposed to religion, but even to common sense. If I wished to enter into this subject, I should have to write a volume. So I must confine myself to a few remarks. We were obliged to banish theology from our University course. I considered this to be a great step towards the freedom and independence of science. Only, now that the "Universitas Studiorum," which, like an encyclopædia, should include all branches of knowledge, comprises nothing relating to the future of mankind, it is found that the youthful mind is becoming increasingly reluctant to investigate religious problems of any sort. We forgot that in Germany and elsewhere the theological faculties have always been the nursery of the greatest philosophers and promoted the simultaneous advance of religion and science. Thus, here in Italy, all serious theological writing has entirely disappeared, together with all regular study of the origins of Christianity and the Church. The clergy are educated in seminaries where the scientific spirit is unknown and where they are never in contact with the classes they should be fitted to direct. Yet we are told at Oxford and Cambridge that mixed schools for laymen and clerics afford the best basis of a truly liberal education. Certainly, the separation of the two classes, whatever the motive may have been, has proved highly injurious to us Italians.

Indeed, by this means, the Italian spirit has been reduced to the strangest condition. Whenever I am serving on a Board of Examiners, I cannot avoid reflecting that nowadays, if any of us were to question the students on some point relating to the miracles of Jesus Christ or the legends of the Saints, our startled hearers would burst out laughing and

exclaim, "Has the man dropped from the moon?" But if, instead, one of us should put a question regarding the myth of Venus or Mercury and the scholar failed to give an intelligent answer, every one would think we were justified in blaming his ignorance. For in our elementary schools we have pushed the exclusion of all religious instruction, not only doctrinal but simply Christian, to the point of absurdity. I remember being once on a Commission, together with my friend Gabelli, for the purpose of making a list of the subjects to be taught. We asked each other, "Why are we charged to bring in Mahomet and the Koran while excluding Jesus Christ and the Gospels?" Nevertheless we had to obey. The Gospel, we were told, was a part of religion, and must therefore be taught by a priest, together with the Catechism that must be prepared by the bishop. The clergy would not accept our ideas of the Gospel; and, did we allow them to have their own way, would invade our schools in order to combat the State. It was best to leave them alone. What labyrinth could be more tangled than this! But another fact of which I had a personal experience serves even better to explain my point of view. In a public lecture given by me in Rome, I maintained that science cannot satisfy all the needs of human life. "For instance," I continued, "when we stand by the bed of some sick relation or friend beyond hope of recovery, what help can science afford us? Why then should science deprive us of the comfort that religion can give, if it has nothing to offer us in its stead?" As I walked downstairs among the crowd, I heard two school teachers just ahead of me discussing my lecture. One of the two, a clever, kindly young man, remarked to the other, "I cannot understand how Villari can be blind to the danger

these words of his will lead to!" "What danger?" "Why, can't you see it? We run the risk of coming to the Father Almighty!" It sounded as though he were saying, "We run the risk of going to the galleys." Indeed, this is no unfrequent state of mind with us. Yet I am not speaking now as a believer, but only as an historian who is investigating the actual state of things, and I venture to say this: As far as we know, there is no civilised society that has not a religion of some sort; for none has yet discovered how to teach morals to the masses, without a religious basis. The existence of religion in the world is an undeniable fact. We must either conciliate it or have it for our foe; in my opinion there should be no doubt as to which course should be chosen. For, meanwhile, the road we are trying to follow ends in a dead wall. Every one can find this out for himself.

Once upon a time I tried to impress my own child with a sense of duty, by force of reasoning. He soon began to yawn and gaze at the door, longing to escape as soon as he could from so wearisome a lesson. When I went to kiss him good-night the same evening, I found him kneeling on the bed, saying his prayers. The nurse had told him to kneel down, to clasp his hands, and pray to God in heaven for his mother and father, and without needing any explanation the child understood all about it. Are we then bound to oppose what are really the laws of nature? And what would be the use of opposing them?

Mankind was not created by us, and we have no power to change its nature. From the moment that we adopted with regard to religion the course traced out by the Renaissance, heedless of the warn-

ings pronounced by Savonarola, who clearly indicated the dangers with which it was beset, we gradually began to overthrow all the highest and most moral ideals cherished in the hearts of the masses who can derive no help from literature, science, or art. Thus we left them a prey to material interests, to class-hatred, to all the savage passions which, as we now begin to realise, led to consequences that were patent to all. Then we asked in alarm: "How has this new thing sprung up?" But it is no new thing. It is the fruit of the seed we have sown, a harvest not yet gathered in. Italy is now faced by two tremendous problems, both of which Savonarola had carefully examined. One of them is the economico-social question, whereas the other is solely and exclusively a question of morals. On the first I need not enlarge, for the friar only treated it in general terms. In his opinion, the social question, which has always been more or less existent, was to be solved by doing justice to the poor, and by using every effort to make all classes of society fraternise with one another. As he frequently repeated: "Love is a great force, love is omnipotent! When the poor clearly see that we pity them, love them, and are determined to do them justice, they are already morally conquered."

It is on this point that I would offer a few remarks which, by confirming Savonarola's words, serve to reply to those persons (of which Italy has many) who believe that nothing need be done for the so-called disinherited classes, that we have no precise duties towards them, that the world will go on as it has always gone on before, and that it is useless to trouble about the matter since one can always take strong measures at crucial moments. Savonarola, on

the other hand, was of those who believe that although in certain contingencies it may be requisite to use force, the sword is not the only cure for problems and evils of this kind; that something may and should be done to remedy them, unless we wish them to grow worse and worse.

Here, first of all, I would ask you to reflect on one point. Even in our peaceful Tuscany we have witnessed some brutal and unprovoked riots [1] such as no one could have expected to occur in this country. But the result of all my inquiries has invariably been that there is one class of Tuscans that has never let itself be caught by the current of discontent. This is the class of peasants employed in the *metairie* system, which, as applied in Central Italy, places them in a juster, more normal and more advantageous position than in other provinces. Now, if this better state of things can exist in one part of Italy, why should it not be established throughout the country? Also when certain advantages have been granted to one class of society, why should we not accord them to all the others? To go on repeating that nothing can be done, only to yield and promise concessions at critical moments, and forget all we promise when the danger is past, cannot be called a wise policy, and can lead to no good in any country whatever. There is also another point that I should like to submit to your consideration. When I went to Sicily after the disturbances of 1893, I found the peasants there complaining most bitterly of the tyrannical practices of tax-gatherers, landlords, and municipal authorities. On the other hand, I was assured by the landlords, fiscal agents,

[1] The disorders incited by the Socialists in Florence and elsewhere in 1897.

and municipal authorities that the peasants were always claiming fresh rights, and that unless force were employed to bring them to their senses it would be impossible to do anything. But on my return to Palermo, I found a cavalry officer seated beside me at the *table d'hôte* of the Hôtel della Palme. I had only exchanged a few words with him, when he suddenly said: "I love our soldiers, I have the greatest admiration for them. You cannot imagine what grand qualities they possess, what acts of generosity they are capable of doing!" Now this verdict entirely agreed with my own experiences in the numerous places I had recently visited. For, while finding fault with everything else, all men spoke well of the soldiery, although it had been employed in quelling the riots by force. The privates and their officers, who had been received everywhere with brotherly cordiality, were seen to be on the best of terms with one another.

How is it, I thought to myself, that the two classes of society so bitterly opposed in private life, and prompt to accuse each other of every crime should be so friendly and appreciative of each other's good points when brought together in the army? I could discover no way of answering the question. So I came to the conclusion that possibly the troops in the island were composed of Northern and Central Italians, and therefore more civilised than our Southern population. Yet, during the recent disturbances in Tuscany and Lombardy, one witnessed even there a savage outburst of the same class-hatred as in the South. Talking of this with another commanding officer, he went on to say: "Don't worry about that; it is the business of the army to civilise the country, and it will do the work

better than most. We call in the conscripts, who, naturally, belong to the same classes which are now in revolt, and have been infected with the same subversive ideas; nevertheless, though I do not exactly know why, the moment our recruits don the uniform, they change into men devoted to order and discipline. Totally unlike what they were before!" In that case, I thought to myself, the uniform is a talisman that instantly changes a man's nature! But there must be some reason for this change; and, on thinking over the matter again, I came to the following conclusion: When a peasant from the Basilicata, or an Abruzzi goatherd, who has been used to be with animals and lead the life of an animal, to be always underfed, poor, and oppressed, is enrolled in the army, where he is treated as a brother and receives fatherly kindness from his superiors, who take care of him, paying due attention to his health and his food, this new state of things has the effect of completely transforming him. The army is on a higher plane of morality than the rest of the nation, owing to the elements of which it is mainly composed—to the chivalrous spirit of the Piedmontese nobility and the ardent patriotism of Garibaldian volunteers. The wonderful moral influence exercised by Italian officers produced notable results, even in the Abyssinian campaign. Whenever our officers were killed in action their bodies were found surrounded by a ring of dead Ascari, who had sought to save them at the cost of their own life-blood. This proves that at bottom human nature is always the same, no matter in what climate, no matter under what coloured skin. When the upper classes feel really attached to the lower the general level of morality is rapidly raised, and this is the true solution

of the social problem. This, too, is the reason why in a country like ours, where all speak ill of everything and everybody else, where all attack the Government, the magistrates, schoolmasters, and professors, where there is no respect for any form of authority, the army alone is exempt from blame. Men acknowledge the truth of its being the healthiest and most moral institution we have. The nation regards the army not only as the representative of its strength, but also as the living embodiment of Italian duty and honour.

The other important question that Italy has now to consider, and that is even more closely connected with the doctrines preached by Savonarola, is essentially a question of morals. I am certain that many of my hearers will have asked themselves the same question I have often put to myself: When our Revolution first began we found that Italy possessed a great number of eminent men. They seemed to rise up suddenly from the earth. And we were justly proud of our fellow-countrymen. But when the Revolution was finished these men gradually disappeared without being replaced by others of the same type, and so we went on from bad to worse. Hence it was natural to exclaim at the strangeness of a land where despotism produced heroes, while freedom produces selfish trimmers! I spoke of this one day with that distinguished English diplomat, Sir James Hudson, who had the warmest love and admiration for Italy, and had positively done more to effect her freedom and independence than many of her own sons. Sir James was then living in the house in Via Alfieri that now bears a tablet to his memory. By way of answering my questions, he laughingly replied: "It's not exactly that; but in this

country men fall to pieces. I have known certain persons who, during the Revolution, made enormous sacrifices of blood and money for the Italian cause, and behaved in a truly heroic fashion; yet, when the Revolution was over, I saw those same men become mean and selfish, and sacrificing to their petty personal interests the very country to which in earlier days they had cheerfully given their all."

In truth, not only are men's actions changed at the present day, but even the language they use is no longer the same. One seems to be in a different world; yet we are in the same country, among the same people; indeed, one may almost say among the same individuals, since little more than a single generation lies between. It is enough to read the letters of the earlier patriots—for instance, those exchanged between La Marmora and other general officers who were his intimates—and to remember the tone of their correspondence. I could cite endless examples of the spirit that prevailed in those days. I will only record one instance of it on the part of some persons who were entirely unknown to me, but that, owing to the great sorrow I was in at the time, made the deepest impression on me. I had just lost my mother; and, as all know, when the mother of a numerous family is snatched away it is as though the sun had disappeared from the planetary system. In this case, the children are the planets who can no longer complete their orbit, for being deprived of the force of attraction that kept them united, they are like wandering atoms, no longer knowing whence they come nor whither they go. In this state of mind I had gone to Venice, hoping that the sight of the lagoons, the palaces and paintings might afford some relief to my pain. I was dining one

evening in a little restaurant at the same table with two young officers who had served in the war against Austria and were gaily talking of their respective experiences. One of them was telling how, on the eve of a battle, he had a violent attack of fever, and was driven wild by the thought that while his comrades were fighting on the morrow he would be lying prostrate in his tent. "But at sunrise next morning, when the battle had begun," he continued, "I heard the distant roaring of the guns, and felt quite content. I was down with small-pox, the doctor despaired of my life, and I thought to myself, 'How lucky that I am here! If I were at home my poor mother would be so terribly grieved to see me in this state!'" Such were the delicate, affectionate feelings common to all the young heroes who fought for the liberation of Italy. What a difference we find at this day, in listening to the talk that goes on around us!

At the Dante Alighieri Congress in Milan a few years ago, I spoke of Tito Speri, the Brescian hero, who, having been captured and condemned to death by General Haynau, wrote the following farewell words to his friend Cavalletto: "I feel so happy, so intensely rejoiced to die for my country, that if other Italians could know it, they would all let themselves be killed." And I deplored the changed times, and the different way of speaking and thinking among the youth of the day. Thereupon some of the new generation resented my words, and attacked me in the papers as follows: "You slander us; you are an old man; you know nothing about the young Italians of this generation; you do not perceive the fire that is smouldering beneath the ashes! What is there for us to do just now? But

if an opportunity occurred, if some fresh crisis were at hand, you would find that even we young ones are good for something." I quite believe this. For I feel sure that in the depths of the national spirit, in memories of our past, the continued and persistent action exercised by literature, by art, by the sacrifice of numerous martyrs, there lies an accumulated store of genuine ideality that at any great moment will be miraculously brought to light. Nor is this the whole of the matter. That hidden ideality is the reason why, throughout the ages, Italy has endured such continual vicissitudes, such remarkable alternations of good and bad fortune. Sometimes our country seems to rise to unexampled superiority, only to lapse with equal suddenness into unworthy degradation. This helps to explain how a nation whose new life began with Victor Emmanuel, Cavour, Mazzini, and Garibaldi, was consolidated by Magenta, Solferino, and the fateful rocks of Quarto, ran the risk we have seen with our own eyes of perishing in the abyss of the Roman bank scandals. The possession of a handful of heroes capable of performing great deeds at critical moments is not enough to make a nation really great. Heroes are not always to be found, and one can often get on without them. But it is always necessary to have millions of good and honest citizens who constantly subordinate private interests to the public welfare. It is a mistake to suppose that idealism and duty are elegant superfluities to be served up on great occasions, at grand official banquets. We need them, on the contrary, at all hours, from the moment we awake to the moment we fall asleep, so long as we remain conscient beings. Nor is it necessary for us to be always treading the stage before an applauding audience,

and dazzled by a vision of glory. According to Savonarola's teachings the true believer, even if driven to shelter in a hovel, deserted by all, slandered by his foes and neglected by those he loves best, should still be able to repeat to himself, "This is the place, this the hour, for the work most acceptable to the Lord." Our life requires us to guard the perpetual flame of the ideal to which we are ready to sacrifice it, inasmuch as life derives all its dignity and value from such sacrifice, and without it would not be worth living. This feeling, all-sufficient to itself and seeking nothing in return, is what constitutes the true greatness of nations as well as of individuals. Nor, without the aid of religion, has it ever proved possible to weld this feeling into the inner heart of nations. They possess it by fits and starts, but it is never converted, as it should be, into the essence of their being.

At this moment, for some unknown reason, a past incident suddenly comes back to me that, although seemingly incongruous to the theme of my discourse, will serve, I think, for the better explanation of its leading idea, namely: the fundamental idea of all the sermons and pamphlets in which Savonarola proclaimed that evangelic love and charity formed the groundwork of the Christian life, the primal germ of all public and private virtue.

At the time when cholera was raging in Naples, a Swedish physician inspected the wretched dwellings of the poor and described what he had seen. His words have great weight, as coming from an expert who could have no reason to exaggerate his impressions. First of all, he went to the hospitals, where he met the persons whom the newspapers declared to be heroes because they gave assistance to the

sick. Disliking the Southern tendency to theatrical effect even during so awful an epidemic—a tendency that was incomprehensible to a Northerner—the doctor was very sarcastic about Neapolitan ways. He went next to the slums of Vicaria and Porto, the lowest quarters of the city, visiting all the sick there and affording them medical aid. Among the houses he inspected was one of those narrow buildings, five or six storeys high, with a single room on each floor. The cholera had emptied all the rooms save one. This was still occupied by the stiffened corpse of a woman that the gravediggers had not yet removed. A small lamp on the floor threw a feeble flicker of light on the scene. By the dead woman's bed stood a fisherman's creel with a dying baby in it. "I could not decide at once," said the doctor, "whether it was perishing of hunger or cholera. I tried my utmost to obtain some milk, but after sending for it in vain and anxiously waiting for some time, I was told at last that it was impossible to find milk at that hour in this part of the town." In another house close by lived the family of an old sailor, who had spent his life crossing and recrossing the Atlantic amid all the perils of the sea. Having a wife and an infant child, he had strictly forbidden the former to enter the cholera-stricken houses, saying, "Think of our little girl, our only child." But as he had gone out, his wife, having heard, perhaps, of the foreign doctor's demands and full of female curiosity, could not keep away from the infected house. And the moment she caught sight of the emaciated, dying babe, "with a gesture I could not describe, but can never forget, she took the child in her arms and put it to her breast. At that moment her husband came in and gave his wife a glance that was meant to be

ferocious. But as he saw her smiling at the babe to encourage it to suck, while she was absorbing the poison that might bring death to her own child and herself, the husband's glance suddenly softened as by magic. For, turning his eyes to heaven, he made the sign of the cross, and with bended head walked slowly from the room."

This woman, doomed to death and oblivion, had had a moment of heroism that, as Massimo d'Azeglio once said on a similar occasion, had no cause to envy the more spectacular greatness of a Cæsar or a Scipio. She was fit to die peacefully with her babe in her arms, and qualified to repeat that dying utterance of the philosopher Plotinus: "I am making a last effort to give back the divine element in me to the divine part of the universe!"

This fervour of Christian charity, asking no recognition, no praise from others, seeking no reward, and sufficient in itself, does not even await great occasions or critical moments, inasmuch as it may be practised anywhere, and at any day or hour of one's life. Neither is it requisite to prove its intrinsic worth by force of argument, since it bears proof in itself, and is the plainest demonstration of the divinity within us and in the world. Christian charity was the foundation of St. Francis's creed, just as it was the essence of Savonarola's doctrines, and inspired every act of his life. "It is a fire," he always said, "that consumes the very marrow of my bones, that compels me to speak, that forbids me to keep silence, disregarding all threats, no matter from what quarter they may come, for I know this to be the doctrine that was preached by Jesus Christ." Therefore, to communicate it to the people, as the friar sought to do,

we require the sanctifying aid of religion, which alone is qualified to enforce it on all with the unquestionable authority that comes from above. But it must be a religion such as Savonarola sought to establish; one fitted to exercise a purifying influence on the country and on freedom, and helping to forward all social progress; a Church that is friendly to the State. And the priests, who are the constituents and representatives of this Church, and whose duty it is to guide the people, are bound, as he said, to represent and personify in their works the doctrines they preach with their lips.

According to the old saying, the voice of the people is the voice of God. For truly the people have a certain divine instinct that tells them what course to follow at great crucial moments. Well, it seems to me that the general wish now shown on all sides to pay honour to Savonarola by recalling his memory, the renewed practice of scattering flowers on the place of his martyrdom, must be a sign that the national spirit has sprung to life again, understands that it had been led astray, and feels the necessity of pursuing a different course. The hour has come for us all to join in reconstructing the moral basis of society. This is the great work that we have now to complete. Parties will arise and become divided later on. They will always remain sterile, if they lack the sole basis of all independent and civilised life. The flag that Savonarola wished to raise, and that fell with him when his body was burnt in the Square of the Signoria on the 23rd of May, 1498, has now, like the Phœnix, arisen from its ashes pure and incontaminate. The task now before us is to secure the final triumph of that flag throughout our native land.

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